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ABSTRACT

The following providers of adult community education (ACE) in Australia were examined in case studies: Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre, a neighborhood house with a small ACE program for residents of the Adelaide outer metropolitan area; Workers' Educational Association of South Australia, Incorporated, which provides a large statewide adult education program for inner-city Adelaide residents; Echuca Community Education Group, which is a small local community learning center-based program for rural Victoria residents; and Manly-Warringah Community College, whose medium-sized ACE program serves residents of the Sydney metropolitan area. Each program was examined from the following standpoints: the vocational orientation of ACE provision, the impact of Australia's Training Reform Agenda, and the relationship between ACE providers and Technical and Further Education (TAFE). In response to increasing consumer demand for skill-based programs, three programs had developed strong vocational components. Only the neighborhood center program retained a general adult education focus. The three providers with strong vocational components were the most affected by the Training Reform Agenda. All four programs demonstrated high degrees of cooperation/coordination with other ACE programs and with TAFE. At the time of the study, all four ACE providers were in the process of significant changes. (Contains 14 references.) (MN)

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Challenges and choices

KATE BARNETT
SARA WILSON

A study of four providers of adult community education

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KATE BARNETT
SARA WILSON

A study of
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NCVER
Adelaide 1994

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Foreword

In recent years, a diversification of training provision has occurred in Australia's vocational education system. One of the implications of this shift towards a 'market' type of provision is the increasingly important role to be played by the different types of training providers, and for this reason, the NCVER has developed a research strategy designed to increase our current understanding of training providers other than TAFE. These providers can be grouped into four categories–

1 *commercial* providers who operate on a for-profit basis
2 *industry* providers who supply training on an industry-basis
3 *enterprise* providers who operate programs within an enterprise or to other enterprises
4 *adult community education* providers.

To date, the NCVER has completed the studies of commercial providers and the study reported here of adult community education providers. Research focusing on industry and enterprise training providers is being conducted throughout 1994.

In undertaking the study, the researchers have received consistent and strong support from the adult community education sector, and from a number of individuals in both government and non-government agencies. In particular, we would like to express our thanks to the following members of the Advisory Group for the project:

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Kate Barnett and Sara Wilson

1 Introduction

1.1 Trends and issues in adult community education

The challenge of change

Adult community education (ACE) in Australia faces a number of challenges arising from a variety of changes occurring in recent years. In the past decade, this largely unrecognised (from a policy perspective) 'Cinderella' sector has grown steadily and in the past few years has begun to receive formal acknowledgement for the critical role which it plays in Australia's education system. In response to community pressure, recent government initiatives have enhanced the recognition of the ACE sector. These include the Senate Standing Committee report, *Come in Cinderella*, (1991),[1] the formulation in 1993 of a national policy on adult community education, and the inclusion of some aspects of ACE provision in the national vocational education data collection.

The Training Reform Agenda is also having an impact on the ACE sector. One of the desired outcomes of the Training Reform Agenda is the development of a national vocational education and training system and the move towards achieving this outcome has provided the ACE sector with the opportunity to articulate its place in this system. Of particular interest is the sector's role as a provider of vocational education and training which, until recently, had not been fully appreciated because of its traditional role as a provider of general adult education. The distinction made between general adult education and vocational education is an issue for the sector.

The distinction drawn between vocational and general education is in many ways an artificial one, particularly when student intention and outcomes from course participation are taken into consideration. Students may enter a course with a recreational purpose in mind but with the confidence or experience acquired, decide to pursue vocational pathways. Submissions to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training argued that the skills acquired in leisure courses often lead to vocational outcomes (e.g. the establishment of a small business). The point was made by one submission that it is the learner's application of the knowledge and skill acquired which determines the vocational or non-vocational nature of a course.[2]

The report known as *Come in Cinderella* (1991) noted that there is a widely-held perception of the ACE sector as nurturing only some

types of skill, and that this affects its funding base in a detrimental manner.

> *ACE is the only sector of education in which by and large individual participants are expected to meet most of the costs of their education. This situation presumes that ACE is concerned only with the enrichment of the individual rather than the enhancement of his/her productive skills or the general betterment of society.*[3]

A similar finding was made by Johnson and Hinton (1986) who noted that–

> *. . . the 'purpose' of a course is ultimately the purpose in the student's mind rather than the teacher's. Furthermore, a course undertaken for a recreational purpose . . . could well have a vocational outcome. Thus a degree of imprecision is inevitable.*[4]

Research undertaken by the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education—AAACE (*Celebrate the Difference* 1991),[5] reinforces this finding, noting that it is not feasible to measure outcomes on the basis of participants' original intention. This research found that disadvantaged groups were often attracted to ACE providers because of the social support offered, with educational or employment opportunities being sought after the fulfilment of personal and social support needs.

The distinction made by some between TAFE as a formal provider, largely of vocational courses, and the adult community education sector as a provider of non-award, non-vocational courses becomes increasingly blurred because of the increasing demand by community members for ACE to provide vocationally-oriented courses and for courses providing some form of certification. This has been a recent trend, and one which can be expected to increase because of award restructuring and other factors which demand specific skills from the workforce. It is, therefore, more useful to think of adult education and vocational education as components of a *continuum* rather than as distinct forms of education.

The past few years have seen an increase of research into adult community education which represents a distinct departure from earlier research which tended to focus on the programs and processes traditionally associated with the sector. More recent research has seen studies which track outcomes for students participating in adult community education, (Kimberley: 1986;[6] AAACE: 1991),[7] which document the vocational scope of ACE (McIntyre et al: 1993),[8] which develop a means of classifying ACE providers, (McIntyre: 1993)[9] which map adult community education provision (AAACE: 1991;[10] Brown et al: 1993),[11] which identify skill formation in the ACE sector (AAACE: 1991)[12] and which provide a detailed profile of ACE consumers (AAACE: 1991).[13]

Such research, and initiatives like the formulation of a national policy on adult community education, reflect the changes which have been occurring in the sector, and provide a widening knowledge base from which to articulate the demand for recognition and legitimation.

Outcomes

The formal lack of recognition of the sector's contribution to Australia's education system stands in contrast to the outcomes provided for its participants. Johnson and Hinton (1986) in a study of adult and non-award continuing education made this point–

> *Adult education is greatly valued by the women who participate in it, and we encountered amongst them a strong sense of grievance at its low status, at the imposition of fees . . . at the slight financial contribution of governments compared to other sectors.*

They described the outcomes obtained as involving:

> *. . . personal development and growth, awareness of social and political issues, preparation for employment and entry to further study. . . . adult education is providing a second chance . . . to overcome early disadvantage at school or lack of early educational opportunity for social or economic reasons.*[14]

A study by Kimberley (1986) found that involvement in adult community education produces a series of outcomes for participants which go beyond personal enrichment and leisure. The following key findings emerged:

- 43 per cent of participants used skills acquired through an adult education course to earn income
- 21 per cent of participants who were employed upon enrolment had increased their employment level as a result of adult education involvement
- 33 per cent of those not in the paid workforce subsequently gained employment
- 38 per cent of participants went on to further education
- 51 per cent of women who enrolled in TAFE programs in the region studied did this via community provided courses. [15]

The AAACE study (*Celebrate the Difference*: 1991) reinforces Kimberley's findings. AAACE structured its research to identify the contribution being made by ACE providers to skills formation, the types of adult skill formation best provided by ACE, and the changes needed to achieve the sector's most relevant role in adult skill formation. In the process, the study involved a detailed mapping of provision in the ACE sector, a statistical analysis of provision, together with an identification of the position of ACE in the training system, and of the extent of the sector's expertise in skills formation.

In relation to neighbourhood house participants, it was found that regardless of the course studied, a pattern of individual development was evident, involving consumers entering a centre with a vague idea of learning a skill through course participation, and that after one or two courses, the consumer became more focussed in their expectations, with their horizons broadening to pursue a wider range of course options. Due to their involvement in centre courses, and the interaction between consumers which is encouraged by centre philosophy, personal development and social skills were accelerated, with all participants studied perceiving that they had learned to be more confident and assertive.

In addition to this increase in personal and social skill levels, centre participants were also found to have developed work-specific skills because of their involvement as volunteers in Centre Committees, office work and so on. Significant improvement in planning and decision-making skills, as well as in interpersonal skills, was also evident.

Across all ACE providers, the AAACE study found that apart from the development of a range of expected skills (e.g. in personal development), generic skill development was also apparent, particularly in communication, planning, problem-solving, organisational and supervision skills. The report of the study also noted that there was a lack of systems designed to recognise and document this learning, a task which must be achieved in order to locate ACE providers within the total training and education system.

The submission by the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training[16] pointed to data gathered from a 1990 study which tracked the history and activities over five years of participants in neighbourhood house programs. A typical path of involvement began with leisure activities and child-related activities (e.g. play group, craft classes, coffee mornings). By the second year participants were likely to be attending health and fitness programs and listening to guest speakers. By the third year, participants could be expected to have become volunteers with the neighbourhood house and were either attending or planning to attend personal development courses, adult literacy courses, followed by TAFE introductory courses and basic education courses. Usually by the fourth year many had returned to or intended to return to paid employment or to obtain entry in vocationally-oriented full-time study. Such a pattern of involvement is acknowledged as representative of participants, and highlights the scope of the community sector to respond to a wide range of need.

Challenges

At the time of writing, the ACE sector faces a number of challenges and opportunities. There are three main sources of pressure being experienced by ACE providers and these originate from–

1 the need to diversify its *funding* base beyond that of state government funding for traditional adult education provision (a source of funding which is unlikely to expand) and from tuition fees. In order to obtain more funding by seeking support from different funding sources, the ACE sector is under pressure to diversify its course provision, and in essence, this means delivering accredited courses whose focus will attract funding for vocationally-oriented programs.

2 The *Training Reform Agenda* is exerting its own set of pressures on ACE providers, and those of particular concern to providers involve obtaining formal recognition as training providers and course accreditation.

3 The third source of pressure originates from *consumers* themselves. The ACE sector is distinguished from other sectors because it is consumer-driven and in recent years consumers have increasingly sought to undertake courses which emphasise skill development. This demand would seem to be influenced by the recession and by the pressure felt by consumers to enhance their employability.

Dilemmas

The challenges set by these pressures create their own dilemmas for ACE providers. Taking on a clearly vocational role could mean a loss of traditional identity, and some providers feel that they face the danger of becoming 'clones' of existing vocational education providers. By moving away from the traditional and legitimated role associated with ACE provision, there could be a loss of credibility with consumers. At the very least, consumers do not expect a clearly vocational role from adult community education providers because this has not been a readily identifiable part of their tradition.

A shift in focus could result in reduced provision for traditional consumers. This is an important consideration because ACE providers see their role as advocating on behalf of those who are not well served in more formally structured education systems. However, to not change could mean not surviving.

Part of the sector's tradition has always been a lack of resources. The development of a clearly defined vocational role presents the opportunity to address this gap by diversifying the funding base, but this could also reduce the sector's autonomy and its ability to be flexible in provision. It also requires considerable human

resource input in order to familiarise with vocational program demands, to develop course structures and to apply for and administer funding attached to programs. The resource situation of most ACE providers makes this a demanding process, which may or may not be for the benefit of the provider and the consumer. These are some of the dilemmas posed and therefore the sector is currently faced with a number of critical decisions which will determine its future direction.

1.2 Defining adult community education

Adult community education providers are not easily defined because they encompass a range of providers and a range of operating modes. Adult community education constitutes a separate education sector, but also forms part of the provision of other sectors. This makes it difficult to define and encourages a perception that it is a somewhat fragmented form of provision.

As a sector, adult community education has evolved in a somewhat unstructured way, mostly without legislative support or bureaucratic structure, and in response to need which is both diverse and has not been able to be addressed by the other three education sectors (schools, further education and higher education). This fourth sector of education is classified as non-government but includes organisations which rely on government funding to provide courses. Increasingly it includes vocationally-oriented courses when once it was primarily a provider of recreational courses. In short, it is a sector which is not easily described.

The national adult community education policy uses the term *'adult community education'* to encompass adult education; adult community education; adult, community and further education; adult education in the community; community-owned and managed adult education; community-based education and community adult education. The authors have adopted this same definition for the present report, but it is recognised that there is no single term which successfully reflects the range of adult education and community education provision existing in Australia.

As an education sector, adult community education provision is distinguished because it is almost totally demand-driven, whereas supply and demand can be said to influence the provisions of the secondary, higher and further education sectors. The fourth sector's provisions are more accurately described as community initiatives rather than as institutional initiatives, which also distinguishes it from the other three education sectors. In the past decade, this demand has underpinned a significant growth in adult community education, and this level of demand is unlikely to be diminished.

The AAACE identifies four broad areas of provision associated with the sector, namely:

a adult basic education (literacy, numeracy etc.)
b general or liberal education (personal enrichment, general interest etc.)
c vocationally oriented education
d public education (parenting courses, land conservation, HIV awareness)[17]

However, it should also be recognised that the education role of most community-based providers is accompanied by a community development and social support role. This is particularly the case with neighbourhood houses and community centres which provide a social focus for participants, and which address a range of needs in the local population. Most of the activities of these centres are community-initiated in response to individual and group requirements within a community context.

Some of the sector's key features are also its major strengths. These include:

- its *accessibility* (both geographically as provisions are locally-based as well as psychologically in that the learning environment is non-threatening and 'user friendly)';
- it is *user-centred* and *consumer-driven*—more so than other education sectors, affording participants a strong sense of ownership of their own learning;
- it works predominantly on a *user pays* basis;
- it is *locally managed*;
- the structure is *decentralised*, and the sector as a whole is the most decentralised of all the education sectors;
- its *flexibility*—consumers may enter and leave programs as they require, and programs can be devised with an absence of the bureaucratic structures and processes characterising other education sectors. There is also considerable scope to respond to individual need;
- it has the *capacity to accommodate disparate need*—the sector caters for a range of need from professionals updating their skills, to migrants improving their English, to people seeking a 'second chance' educationally, to women who wish to return to the paid workforce, to retired people and to workers needing to adjust to new technology;
- essentially the provisions of the adult community education sector do *not* adhere to the demands of compulsory education;

- its approach is open, non-didactic and *informal;*
- a *range of delivery modes* are applied to suit a range of learner needs;
- the emphasis is on mastery of *content* rather than completion of study over a set period of time;
- the trainer is a *facilitator* rather than a learning authority;
- the majority of participants, and providers are *women.*

Although some of these features are apparent in the other three sectors of education (secondary, further and higher), they serve as defining characteristics for the adult community education sector.

As the Senate Standing Committee Report, *Come in Cinderella,* (1991) noted:

> *Most do not appreciate the extent of these operations . . . which . . . [are] dismissed, quite inaccurately, as 'recreation and leisure'—or the degree to which adult and community education links in to more formal educational provision . . . [this] accounts in part for the lack of recognition afforded this sector and its tenuous and inadequate funding.*[18]

It should be noted that the report of the Committee has since had the effect of bringing considerable and much needed recognition for the sector.

1.3 Government involvement in adult community education

The Senate Standing Committee Report also noted that the lack of a Commonwealth structure to provide national representation (and often there is an absence of any structure at the State level) combined with the delivery by large numbers of diverse, small providers gives a rather fragmented view of the sector. This is exacerbated by the wide range of activities undertaken by adult community education providers.

AAACE's *Celebrate the Difference* study (1991) developed a structural map of ACE provision which revealed a lack of consistency in the models of provision as well as a lack of national co-ordination of ACE effort. This disorder was seen as being consistent with an absence of a cohesive framework for skills formation.[19]

Given the local focus of most adult community education provision, and the fact that it is largely consumer-driven, it is extremely difficult for the sector to evolve in any unified fashion because this

would destroy its autonomy. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the need for recognition of the sector.

> *. . . it is both surprising and regrettable that no Commonwealth mechanisms exist which might provide a focus, a degree of coherence or some policy direction on adult and community education in general, or to afford the sector some official Commonwealth recognition.*[20]

Provision by State and Territory governments tends to be peripheral in comparison to the support provided to schools and technical and further education. Responsibility is often shared by a number of different agencies and these vary from one state to another. Funding of the sector varies markedly. Regular official contact is maintained between responsible authorities through the Conference of Senior Officers in Adult Education. This has evolved from an informal, unstructured and unofficial group to an increasingly representative and recognised forum of state/territory representatives.

The formulation in 1993 of a national policy on adult community education is one indicator of a slow but steady movement towards recognition of the sector. The policy builds on the knowledge base yielded by the *Come in Cinderella* report and concentrates on the provision of learning opportunities at a community level through a range of delivery modes.

The drafting of the policy has been a collective effort on the part of state and commonwealth policy officers and the AAACE, who have consulted widely with the sector in both the development and finalisation stages. The policy sets out six goals, each of which has its own set of strategies. In this way, the document provides formal acknowledgement of the role and work of adult community education, and provides a loosely structured agenda for future action.

1.4 The major providers of adult community education

1.4.1 TAFE

Most TAFE systems have established mechanisms to co-ordinate the provision of adult community education by TAFE and non-TAFE providers, and specifically to minimise competition or duplication by each type of provider. (This co-ordination of effort is examined in the case studies undertaken for this report.)

1.4.2 Higher education

Extension services in the universities have meant that universities play a significant role in non-formal adult education. In most instances, extension courses focus on liberal arts and related subjects. The contribution made by universities varies from one institution to another.

1.4.3 The schools sector

Adult community education receives its main support from the schools sector by the use of school buildings outside of school hours. The recent development of re-entry schools links schools directly with the provision of adult community education. These schools provide for adults who have not completed their secondary schooling and offer Year 11 and 12 courses leading to matriculation, bridging courses for those not ready for Year 11 and a range of non-award courses, some delivered jointly with TAFE. Students can attend on a full-time or part-time basis and during day or evening hours.

1.4.4 Community providers

Community providers are responsible for a large proportion of Australia's adult community education. For example, in New South Wales, an estimated 1.7 million people enrol through the neighbourhood house network each year, and a further 280 000 enrol in Community Colleges and Community Adult Education Centres. Victoria, with 25 per cent of the total Australian population, holds 35.0 per cent of total national enrolments in adult, community and further education (Gribble: 1992 p.23).[21]

The size and scope of the sector varies from state to state but, according to the AAACE, the most highly developed systems are recognised as existing in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. (The providers case studied for the present report were located in these three states.) In its submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, the AAACE noted that in these three States–

> *. . . the community sector has achieved recognition and funding support from government. In Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland, where TAFE has taken on the role of the major provider, the community-based sector is by contrast relatively under-developed and critically under-resourced.*[22]

Community providers can be separated into two groups based on their size and operating mode:

a Those which operate at the *local* or neighbourhood level. Typically, these have a strong local focus and are dependent on

local support. They usually rely on part-time management and teaching staff (whose pay rate is predictably low) and are highly dependent on volunteers.

b Those which function at a *statewide* or *regional* level. These are likely to have a significant infrastructure and to receive annual grants from State governments to maintain a core of permanent full-time staff. These providers are large enough to attract significant government funding and to derive substantial income from fee-paying students. Examples of this type of provider are the Council of Adult Education in Victoria, the WEAs in South Australia and New South Wales and the Community Colleges operating in New South Wales.

(The present study has focussed on community providers operating at both local and statewide levels.)

Local level providers

Neighbourhood houses and *community centres* are the most numerous group of community-based providers in Australia. Recent estimates describe an annual participation rate of over 1.7 million people of whom at least 90 per cent are women, with over 10 000 workers paid and unpaid providing programs.[23]

Neighbourhood houses are highly informal in their operation and their efforts are directed to a range of community development activities. They operate with a minimum of paid staff and with large numbers of volunteers. Their focus is local and their programs are developed in direct response to immediate and local need. They are flexible and able to adapt quickly to changing need and their environment is essentially non-threatening and consumer-focussed.

The Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association of South Australia (CAN), in describing its philosophy of adult education in the community highlights the importance of this non-threatening learning environment, which is based on

> *. . . a comfortable atmosphere, time programs to suit participants and . . . no entry requirements.*[24]

In addition, the learning environment is built on an absence of pressure for course completion. Neighbourhood houses and community centres have been found to be conducive to learners discovering their most appropriate educational directions, partly because of their user-friendly environments and partly because course completion is not a necessary criterion of success (as it is in the other three education sectors). (Because of the unique role played by neighbourhood houses and community centres in the provision of adult community education, one of the case studies

undertaken for the present research study focuses on a neighbourhood house.)

Where neighbourhood houses and community centres exist primarily as agents for community development, and hence any education provided forms part of this mission, *neighbourhood learning centres* provide education as their primary role and purpose.

Community Adult Education Centres are accredited providers operating in regional and rural localities in New South Wales. Their structure is informal and localised as they are managed by an elected committee of local people who distribute Board of Adult and Community Education funds and employ centre co-ordinators. Courses provided by CAECs span basic, liberal, vocational and public education.

The equivalent of these centres in Victoria are known as *Community Learning Centres* which are autonomous incorporated bodies, managed by a locally elected committee and focusing on local need. Courses operate on a user pays basis and cover the range of basic, liberal, vocational and public education programs. Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) courses and access courses for targeted groups are also provided. (The present study takes as one of its case studies a community learning centre operating in Echuca, Victoria.)

Community Colleges operate in metropolitan and rural areas of New South Wales. Originally, they provided liberal studies courses, but in recent years their programs have expanded to include courses in literacy and numeracy, vocational and prevocational courses. They are recognised by the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education as providers of adult education and no longer operate under the auspices of the Education Department. Each college has a full-time principal and salaried teaching and administrative staff. Colleges receive annual funding from the Board of Adult and Community Education to support some salary and program costs, but most costs are met through fees. (The fourth case study of this report focuses on a community college in New South Wales—the Manly-Warringah Community College.)

Another form of local and consumer-driven provision is delivered by the *University of the Third Age (U3A)* which has an estimated membership of more than 15 000 and provides opportunities for older people to study and to socialise. The U3A movement is totally self-directed and controlled, with members often providing learning input on a voluntary basis. There are more than 70 groups operating throughout Australia, many of whom receive support (e.g. classroom venues, photocopying facilities) from higher education authorities.

State-wide providers

The *Council of Adult Education (CAE)* represents a unique provider model and plays a key role in the provision of adult education in Victoria. It is itself a large provider, and assists other adult education providers by providing advice and support. A key support provided by the CAE is its computer bulletin board, the Adult Education Organisation Network (AEON), which connects 200 or so members. Established in 1946 with its own Act, the CAE is a statutory authority which receives independent funding. It provides a wide range of courses covering such areas as liberal arts, language, fitness, business studies, literacy, basic education and English as a Second Language, as well as Victorian Certificate of Education courses.

There are two *Workers Educational Associations (WEAs)* operating in Australia—one (operating in four locations) in New South Wales and one in South Australia. The New South Wales WEA is the largest non-government provider of adult education in New South Wales and operates from four regional centres. Each region receives an annual grant from the Board of Adult and Community Education but most revenue is obtained on a cost-recovery basis from course provision.

The WEA in NSW originally focussed on liberal studies programs for working people, particularly those who had missed educational opportunities as young people. However, more recent profiles of participants indicate that the majority are from educationally advantaged groups. In New South Wales, the WEA works in co-operation with local community groups, government agencies and other educational organisations to identify local need in the development of courses.

In South Australia, the WEA is also the largest non-government provider of non-award adult education. It provides a wide range of personal enrichment and vocationally-oriented courses, and operates a Training and Development Service which supplies a variety of business and computer studies programs to government and private sector organisations.

Government grants provide about 10 per cent of the WEA's annual income, but the majority is obtained on a cost-recovery basis from its courses. With specific commonwealth government funding, the WEA also provides a program which enhances access for people with physical or mild intellectual disabilities to its courses. (The South Australian WEA forms one of the case studies presented in this report.)

1.5 Project methodology

This project has been guided by three objectives:

1 to examine the vocational orientation of the programs offered by community providers;

2 to obtain an understanding of the impact being made on community providers by the Training Reform Agenda;

3 to examine the relationship between community providers and TAFE colleges.

Information gathered for this report has been drawn from three primary sources–

- a review of relevant primary and secondary research
- interviews with key individuals
- case studies of four adult community education providers

Sections 1.0 and 2.0 of this report are based on information derived from the first two sources, while sections 3.0 to 8.0 document the findings emerging from the case studies.

1.5.1 Selection of case studies

The four case studies were selected to reflect a range of provider types, locations, provider size and provider roles. At the same time, each case study was given a particular focus in relation to program provision, with three providers being studied with a focus on their vocational courses and the fourth with a focus on its provision of adult literacy. Finally, the case studies also examined the relationship between each provider and the TAFE college in nearest physical proximity.

Together, these case studies focus on providers ranging—

a in size – from small to large
b in focus – from the local level to the statewide level

and who are –

c situated in differing locations—from inner-city, to metropolitan, to outer-metropolitan, to rural.

Three of the providers studied have adult community education as their primary role, while for the fourth this is a secondary role.

The following chart summarises the features of the providers forming the case studies.

Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre	
Size	small
Focus	local
Type	neighbourhood house
Education role	secondary
Location	outer metropolitan, Adelaide

WEA(SA)	
Size	large
Focus	statewide
Type	adult education centre
Education role	primary
Location	inner-city, Adelaide

Echuca Community Education Group	
Size	small
Focus	local
Type	community learning centre
Education role	primary
Location	Victoria

Manly-Warringah Community College	
Size	small-medium
Focus	local
Type	community adult education centre
Education role	primary
Location	metropolitan, Sydney

2 The training reform agenda and adult community education

The Training Reform Agenda is an umbrella term which refers to a package of reforms designed to enhance the effectiveness of vocational education and training. These reforms have been agreed upon by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers, and have broad industry endorsement. Among the key components of the Training Reform Agenda are the following:

- the development of national competency standards
- the development of competency-based training and assessment
- closer links between TAFE and industry
- a blurring of the divisions between public and private training provision
- increased competition between TAFE and other providers
- a move towards an open training market
- a national framework for the recognition of training (NFROT)
- flexible delivery and open learning
- recognition prior learning (RPL)
- equity of access

The Training Reform Agenda seeks to make vocational education and training more responsive to the needs of industry and to make it more integrated and more consistent nationally. It also encourages a more flexible system which promotes learning in a variety of settings, and which gives priority to learning outcomes rather than to the processes by which learning is attained. These changes have a number of implications for all vocational education providers, across all education sectors.

2.1 Competition and co-operation

TAFE has played the central role in the provision of off-the-job vocational training. However, the Training Reform Agenda encourages a reduction of this position by increasing the opportunity for other providers to deliver vocational education and training. These other providers can be classified into two main groups:

a commercial providers, operating on a for-profit basis

b community providers, operating on a non-profit basis

Although the Training Reform Agenda encourages competition among providers, it is also important to consider the role played by co-operation in defining relationships among providers. Given the demand for vocational training, and the need to avoid wastage of resources by duplication of training effort, it is likely that co-operation between providers will be as significant as competition.

One of the major influences on the relationship between education providers and between education sectors is student demand for courses in particular fields of study. When demand cannot be met by one sector, and within sectors by individual providers, other providers will step in to fill the gap. This trend is likely to gather momentum under a more market-driven vocational education and training system.

Commercial providers studied in the course of research undertaken during 1993 for the NCVER[25] were found to be filling 'niche' markets created by unmet demand in the TAFE sector. In the higher education sector, unmet demand has increased substantially in recent years as has that in the TAFE sector. A 'trickle-down' effect can be observed and commercial providers have been responding to gaps in the current system's inability to fully meet student demand. Commercial providers are mindful of their lack of resources and infrastructure, relative to TAFE, with whom they are not necessarily in a position to compete. In this NCVER-funded research, competition was more likely to occur among commercial providers rather than between TAFE and these providers. Similarly, the research which is the subject of the present report, has found that community providers are likely to compete with commercial providers for the delivery of some vocational programs, while their relationship with TAFE is essentially one of co-operation.

2.2 Impact of the training reform agenda

Of the providers studied for the research reported here, only the neighbourhood centre was not significantly affected by the Training Reform Agenda, and this is almost certainly because its provision of education is a secondary role. It should be noted that as part of the community services industry, neighbourhood houses and other community-based providers are not only delivering education for the general community but act as skills training sources for their own industry (for example, for volunteer and management committee training). This aspect of their training role does not receive widespread recognition, mainly because it occurs in an informal manner.

The other three providers studied are all responding to the Training Reform Agenda's call for competency standards and training which

reflects these, for registration and accreditation of provision, and for improved articulation between providers and sectors. For those studied, the pressure to obtain accreditation is causing considerable difficulty (see sections 1.1 and 3.2).

2.3 Equity considerations

In promoting a more market-driven vocational education and training system, the Training Reform Agenda encourages competition among providers, and this usually equates with a promotion of efficiency. Efficiency is often regarded as independent of, or even threatening to, equity. Much depends on individual attitudes. Equity can be treated either as an unwanted cost or as a necessary ingredient which enhances effectiveness by avoiding a wastage of human resources.

It is likely that the existing commitment and contribution by the ACE sector to the needs of disadvantaged groups will be expanded and become increasingly important in a more open training market. Unless governments develop vocational education policy which promotes both equity and efficiency, the responsibility for access and equity will not be shared by all vocational education providers.

2.4 Adult literacy

The Training Reform Agenda has caused a re-thinking of the factors which affect vocational outcomes. This has become increasingly evident in the relationship between adult literacy and vocational education.

Training reform has highlighted the need for a skilled workforce, and one which is also multiskilled, and this in turn has meant that significant numbers of people must undertake re-training programs. In the course of such re-training, difficulties with language, literacy and numeracy become evident, and there is a growing awareness that re-training programs are not equipped to address such deficiencies.

In Australia's first national survey of adult literacy, Wickert (1989) identified that approximately one million adult Australians have significant literacy problems. Her study conceptualised literacy as a set of skills that vary from one context to another, and that are, therefore, relative to time and place.[26]

A key issue in the provision of adult literacy programs is the need for increased collaboration between providers and for improved co-ordination of provision. Case Study 1 reported here focuses on the adult literacy program of a neighbourhood centre and its local

TAFE Institute, and examines the co-ordination of provision occurring between both providers.

The role of adult community education providers is changing and it can be argued that this is in the large part a response to changing patterns of demand being placed on the fourth sector of education. This demand can be traced to two main sources—the pressure for education in all sectors to reflect the needs of industry by teaching skills which can lead to economically productive outcomes, and the demand by individual consumers of education for a range of educational opportunities spanning a continuum from personal enrichment to vocational programs. This means that the fourth sector is playing an increasingly significant role in supplying vocationally-oriented courses when once its major focus was on general education programs.

The impact of demand by industry on the further education sector can be seen to be having a related impact on the adult community education sector with further education increasingly defining its role as vocational and therefore, reducing its general education provisions. The assumption is that the fourth sector can and will deliver these programs. However, as this report has noted, the division between general education and vocationally-oriented programs is not a simple one, and this in turn, means that the divisions between education sectors are likely to become increasingly blurred.

The future role of the adult community education sector is also going to be influenced by the funding made available to it. Whether or not current and inadequate levels of government funding will be increased to reflect the wider role being played by the sector remains to be seen. The AAACE's paper to the Training Costs Review Committee pointed out that the sector's capacity to expand further and deliver a wider range of training programs is dependent on five factors:

- adequate infrastructure at the local, state and national level;
- linkages being strengthened with other education and training sectors to ensure articulation for participants;
- improved training opportunities for adult learning facilitators;
- increased visibility of the sector in industry and in the wider community;
- the sector receiving credibility regarding the relevance, affordability and quality of its programs.[27]

At this point in time, the adult community education sector would seem to be facing a series of challenges which will shape its future role as an educational provider. It is, therefore, timely to explore its current role, and the contribution which this makes both on an individual level and on a sector-wide level.

3 Overview of findings

The four case studies which follow have been focussed to examine three factors–

1 the vocational orientation of community provision of education and training

2 the impact of the Training Reform Agenda on community providers

3 the relationship between community providers and TAFE colleges

3.1 Vocational orientation

Three of the four providers studied have developed a strong vocational component as part of their overall course provision. For two of these providers—the WEA and the Echuca Community Education Group—this has also involved establishing separate training units which target local enterprises as well as individual consumers. These two providers, together with Manly-Warringah Community College have also tendered for funding to deliver labour market training programs, and Manly-Warringah has been highly successful in this area.

The remaining provider—Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre—has retained a program with a general adult education focus. It recognises that it may well develop a specifically vocational course component in the future, but for the present, it lacks the human resources to develop such courses and its consumers have not expressed a demand for the centre to take this direction. Unlike the other three providers studied, Trott Park's education and training role is secondary to its main role of support, information and community development and this may well affect the adoption of a clearly vocational role.

For all of the providers studied, it was apparent that consumer demand for skill-based programs had been increasing, while demand for recreation-based programs had decreased. This trend was seen by these providers as a response to changing economic and employment conditions, emanating largely from the recession.

Accompanying the demand for courses which can enhance employment opportunities for consumers was a significant level of demand for certification of vocational courses delivered by the providers studied. This certification usually took the form of certificates of attainment issued by the providers themselves (rather

than by nationally recognised authorities), and these were described by providers as being acceptable to students and to their employers.

3.2 Impact of the Training Reform Agenda

The three providers who have developed specifically vocational programs were also the three who have been most affected by the Training Reform Agenda. The two elements of the agenda which have had the most noticeable effect on these providers are the development of competency-based training and the accreditation of courses. Vocational programs delivered by these three providers are aligned, where appropriate, to specific competencies and are structured in module form. These providers were experiencing considerable pressure to provide accredited programs, yet to do so, created significant resource-related difficulties.

The accreditation process was described by providers as time-consuming as well as expensive, and extremely taxing on limited staff resources. Yet the delivery of accredited training was seen as a means of diversifying their funding base, thereby enhancing existing resources. These providers faced a further dilemma in relation to accreditation—namely, that they had yet to achieve credibility as providers of accredited vocational education programs. Without this legitimation, they were facing the risk of investing considerable resources in the accreditation process only to find that insufficient numbers of students would respond to accredited provisions offered by them.

These providers also perceived that although they had always delivered programs yielding vocational outcomes, the move towards providing accredited vocational programs, and to competing for funding for such programs, was likely to alter their 'traditional' role and function as providers of general adult education. The challenge, then, was seen to involve the achievement of a balance between general and vocational education provision.

The Training Reform Agenda's encouragement of increased and more effective vocational training opportunities has created an opportunity for these providers to diversify their program offerings and in the process to increase their funding base. All three actively compete for labour market training provision, and are delivering short courses with a skills focus. Although this trend represents a response to training opportunities enhanced by the Agenda, it also represents a response to individual consumer demand and to demand from enterprises, especially from small businesses. The Echuca Community Education Group has been developing courses designed specifically for local firms, and has also been pro-active in identifying training needs for these firms and developing courses to

meet these needs. Similarly, the WEA's business training program can and has been modified to meet the specific training needs of individual firms, and a significant proportion of students attending its business studies courses have been sent by their employers.

All three providers delivering vocational programs believe that the impetus for vocationally-focussed courses which comes from individual consumers is also a response to the recession and associated problems of unemployment. Consumers are seeking courses which will enhance their employability or allow them to develop skills in new career areas. This was especially evident in Echuca, where the local farmers and their spouses were seeking courses which would enhance their farming skills (e.g. farm management) or seeking new employment opportunities to compensate for diminished returns from farming.

One of the desired outcomes of a reformed training system is the development of learning pathways between training providers and across education sectors. This is a highly desirable outcome, which reduces the potential for duplication of training and learning effort and promotes flexibility in training delivery.

However, students interviewed for the case studies were not attuned to these pathways, nor were they interested in pursuing them. It seemed that once a student was part of a learning system— be it TAFE or community provision—and they were content with that system (and all of those interviewed expressed a high level of satisfaction with their particular provider), their plan was to pursue the learning opportunities offered by that provider. However, community providers' students were likely to plan to undertake designated TAFE courses, after they had completed courses with their community provider. A pathway back from TAFE to the ACE sector was not discernible in relation to those interviewed.

The community providers studied anticipated that the wider application of Recognition of Prior Learning would enhance the ability of their students to move to other providers, and expected that with an appropriate information strategy to increase student awareness of such options, articulation would become increasingly significant. It would seem from the findings of this study that learning pathways will be accessed by students in accordance with their understanding of the learning options available, their experience of these options, and the availability of these options. Beyond these factors, there will also be a range of access issues (such as, course location, fees structure, and other equity-influencing factors like language, disability, culture and gender).

3.3 Relationship with TAFE

Another key element of the Training Reform Agenda is the diversification of the vocational education system. This promotes an enhanced role for other providers, particularly those in the private sector. The scene has been set for a move towards a more open training 'market', and a key feature of this is seen as involving increased competition among providers and between sectors for the delivery of vocational education.

The degree to which competition exists between providers will vary, and one of the purposes of this study has been to examine the degree of competition, and of co-operation existing between TAFE and community providers. One of the key findings emerging from this study is the limited amount of competition between the two types of providers and a high degree of co-operation and co-ordination .

This co-operation has begun at the level of course planning, with each provider agreeing to avoid duplication in program provision, and continues through course delivery to involve considerable cross-referral of students and sharing of resources. Community providers studied point out, however, that such resource-sharing is somewhat unequal, with community providers being unable to reciprocate to match TAFE input. This, they feel, makes the relationship somewhat unbalanced, but the co-operation is nevertheless appreciated.

The nature of the co-operation between ACE and TAFE providers also varied according to the focus of the community provider. Three of the providers studied were operating at the local level and had formed strong working relationships with their local TAFE institute or college. The fourth, the WEA in Adelaide, is a state-wide organisation and has a more diffused working relationship, spreading over a number of TAFE Institutes.

In New South Wales and Victoria (where the Manly-Warringah Community College and Echuca Community Education Group were studied) this co-operation has been cemented in legislative form. In Victoria, the Adult , Community and Further Education Act was proclaimed in March, 1992 and requires the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board and the State Training Board to jointly prepare a three year plan designed to ensure the effective planning and co-ordination of adult, community and further education in Victoria. The current 1993-1995 Plan has three guiding purposes—to analyse the needs of the community in relation to adult, community and further education, to prioritise these needs and to establish targets to meet these needs.

A three year joint strategic plan is also prepared by the New South Wales TAFE Commission and the Board of Adult and Community Education. This Plan is required by both the Technical and Further

Education Commission Act of 1990 and the Board of Adult and Community Education Act of 1990. The current plan for 1993-1995 targets three areas—joint planning of provision, enhancement of student pathways and effective use of resources.

South Australia does not have such a formalised process of co-ordination between the TAFE and ACE sectors and has relied on a Ministerial Advisory Committee to guide policy and funding for adult community education. At the time of writing, the committee was being replaced by an ACE council, which would be part of the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Board.

While the relationship between these community providers and TAFE is one defined by co-operation, their relationship with private training providers is essentially competitive in tendering to deliver labour market programs and to provide training for local industry. Manly-Warringah Community College, the Echuca Community Education Group and WEA (SA) were all competing with local private providers in the delivery of vocational education programs.

3.4 The pressure to change

All of the community providers studied were in the process of significant change, and this can be summarised as involving the following seven key factors:

- a change in program provision to include more skills-based and vocationally-focussed courses;
- pressure to diversify the basis for funding due to limited resources being available from adult community education funding sources;
- involvement in competitive tendering to deliver labour market programs;
- increasing student numbers and a change in the consumer profile to include business organisations as well as individuals;
- pressure to provide accredited courses in delivering vocational education and training;
- because of the developing role as a provider of vocational education and training, pressure exists to obtain recognition and credibility in the community for this role;
- the preceding six factors are combining to produce a change in the traditional role and function of community providers, and in community expectations of this role.

The way in which each of these seven factors is affecting the four providers case-studied is described in the chart which follows.

Increased skill-based program	Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre	WEA(SA)	Echuca Community Education Group	Manly-Warringah Community College
Increased skill-based program		✓	✓	✓
Diversifying funding basis	✓	✓	✓	✓
Competitive tendering		✓	✓	✓
Increasing student numbers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accreditation pressure		✓	✓	✓
Certification pressure		✓	✓	✓
Credibility pressure		✓	✓	✓
Change in traditional role and function	✓	✓	✓	✓

4 Case Study 1: Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre

4.1 Introduction

Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre is located in the outer suburban area to the south of Adelaide. As in all Australian cities, outer metropolitan suburbs contain the population growth areas and are notable for their high numbers of new housing developments and for their lack of services (relative to the metropolitan area). Public transport is one such service which is extremely limited, and those without independent means of transport are isolated and housebound.

For this reason, the centre's location on the 2 000 home housing estate developed for the suburbs of Trott Park and Sheidow Park is critical because it is accessible for local residents, particularly housebound women. In contrast, the local TAFE campus (Onkaparinga Institute, O'Halloran Hill campus) is located away from the main housing area and for those without private transport, can only be reached by a limited bus service or by walking several kilometres, most of which is paddocks.

Established in 1985, the centre differs from most neighbourhood houses because it does not live from one state government annual grant to the next. Marion City Council has provided the centre's infrastructure and meets its recurrent expenses. It therefore has a security which most other neighbourhood houses lack. Its co-ordinator has been with the centre since its inception nine years ago, and as a council employee has a career path and a diversity of future work opportunities. Again, this stands in contrast with the situation of most neighbourhood house co-ordinators.

These features aside, the centre is typical of most neighbourhood houses in its provision of support and a range of activities to the local community, its consumer focus, its commitment to community development principles and to a social justice philosophy. Like other centres, most of its consumers are women, many of whom have a range of personal, social and learning needs met by their participation in centre activities. Unlike the other three providers case studied, whose provision of adult community education is their central purpose and activity, the centre's provision of structured learning opportunities is one of a number of its roles.

4.2 Features of the centre

4.2.1 Course provision

The centre provides a wide range of courses covering personal development, fitness and self-defence, craft and hobbies, parenting skills and adult literacy and numeracy. In 1993, the following program was offered, and was developed in response to consumer request:

- adult literacy
- baby massage and child development in the first year
- food for toddlers
- kids club—games and other activities for five to twelve year olds
- kindergym
- STEP (Systematic Training in Effective Parenting)
- playgroup
- stretch sewing
- fabric painting and folk art
- photography club
- craft group
- quilting and patchwork
- rhee taekwondo
- kids karate
- self defence for women
- aerobics
- assertiveness training/confidence development

In addition, the centre provides a mobile library, a toy library and a dress pattern library and hosts an on-site immunisation program. Free child care is available for most courses. On-going training is also provided for volunteers.

Course fees are very low, averaging between $1.00 and $2.00 per session, and payable on a session by session basis. This level and method of payment is essential if residents with low levels of disposable income are to be able to access the centre's program. Adult literacy is provided without course fees.

The adult literacy class is the only program receiving outside funding, which pays for the salary of a co-ordinator to provide ten hours per week of course co-ordination. The class usually involves up to twelve students, most of whom are from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The co-ordinator is assisted by a number of volunteer tutors, which permits one-to-one teaching, and the program is designed to meet the most basic level of literacy need.

4.2.2 Students

The centre provides support and learning opportunities for some 600 people, the majority of whom are women, and most of these women are also parents. Many are socially isolated and the centre plays a critical role in building confidence and social networks as well as providing learning opportunities. The centre remains in contact with its consumers over long periods of time and is able to track learning and other outcomes arising from involvement with the centre and its programs.

A typical 'pattern' is for local residents to join an activity at the centre, or to seek assistance with child care, and to progress through a number of programs after which it is often the case that volunteer training is undertaken and the consumer begins working at the centre in a voluntary capacity. All of this is extremely effective in building confidence while establishing social networks and developing a range of skills. It is not unusual for volunteers to then take up further studies, often with TAFE, or to obtain paid employment.

A small proportion of Trott Park residents are recently arrived migrants of non-English-speaking backgrounds. In particular, this includes people from Poland, Iran and Romania and a small number of Chinese and Vietnamese people live in the area. For many of these people, issues of social isolation are especially acute, and the centre's adult literacy program has proved to be a key mechanism for encouraging their participation in centre activities.

4.2.3 Staff

Marion Council funding provides for the centre's co-ordinator position and with the exception of the adult literacy tutor, all teaching staff are contracted according to course demand, and many of these are voluntary. Teachers receiving payment for their tuition are encouraged to run their classes as a small business, with the centre retaining a discretionary oversighting role. Local service providers (for example, Community Health Services) also contribute staff to deliver some courses. There are no paid support staff.

The centre is supported by the efforts of some 50 volunteers whose main responsibilities involve administration, teaching, committee membership, research, advertising and promotion and support (for example, child care and library).

Staff (both paid and volunteer) must fulfil a number of criteria, based on both personal and professional qualities, in order to work for the centre. They must possess above average communication skills, live in the local area and have a commitment to developing the community. It is also essential they have a commitment to social justice principles. The centre looks for demonstrated skills

and knowledge rather than formal qualifications, and is committed to the recognition of prior learning.

4.2.4 Physical facilities

Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre has been purpose-built. A brick structure, it complements the architectural style of the surrounding homes and overlooks the housing estate and rolling hills surrounding the estate. Internally, the centre takes the form of an auditorium and a number of smaller rooms. The centre is exceptionally child-friendly. Its garden has play equipment and many of the activities held are designed for children.

4.2.5 Funding sources

Marion Council meets all capital and recurrent expenditure costs. In 1993, a total of $55 000 was allocated to the centre. In addition, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) provides $6 500 for the centre's Adult Literacy Co-ordinator.

The majority of the centre's funding comes from Marion Council (90 per cent), about 5 per cent from fund raising and less than 5 per cent from State government grants. Only 0.1 per cent of funding is derived from student tuition fees.

4.3 Response to change

4.3.1 Impact of the training reform agenda

At the time of writing, the centre was largely untouched by the Training Reform Agenda, probably because its education program is not deliberately focussed on vocational outcomes. The program provided represents a direct response to consumer demand, and centre users are more likely to be seeking personal rather than vocational support from the program.

None of the centre's courses are accredited and the centre is not formally registered as a training provider. Unless the nature of the current education program changes, it is unlikely that it will follow this direction. However, centre staff are aware of the agenda and are attempting to prepare for any changes which it may bring. At present, the most likely area of change is envisaged by staff as involving a strengthening of existing, somewhat weak, pathways between community education providers and other providers, particularly TAFE.

The centre provides opportunities for many consumers to experiment with learning opportunities and to develop confidence

as students. For most of these consumers, more structured and formal learning, such as that provided by TAFE, is threatening. The centre acts as a gateway, allowing these students to learn at their own pace. The Training Reform Agenda's encouragement of articulation, recognition of prior learning and credit transfer is likely to enhance the centre's current role as a preparation for formal study. Whether or not this will see an expansion of the existing education program to encompass specific vocational courses remains to be seen.

The centre's co-ordinator is aware of a change in consumer demand which involves a moderate level of demand for certification of courses undertaken, mainly because this is seen by consumers as enhancing employment promotion and employment re-entry opportunities. The co-ordinator is also aware of an increasing demand by consumers to learn more and to broaden their learning in a general sense.

4.3.2 Issues to be addressed

The key issue facing Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre is the need to strengthen its current financial resource base. Current staffing levels limit the centre's scope to address issues requiring specialist knowledge (e.g. some equity-related issues, vocational training issues).

Accepting that government funding is unlikely to be forthcoming, centre staff are pursuing more creative solutions. All but one of the community centres in the southern region have recently joined to form a collective which allows them to purchase goods in bulk and thereby save significantly on equipment and administration-related costs. Known as the Fleurieu Community Education Network, the collective has become incorporated and one of its first tasks will be the employment of an education co-ordinator. The formation of this collective was the outcome of a research project funded by South Australia's Community Adult Education Program. This project recommended that a part-time community education co-ordinator be appointed to examine available funding options, areas for future growth and promotion mechanisms.

Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre had been aware for some time of the need to employ an education co-ordinator, to facilitate the expansion of the current program (which may then involve the development of specifically vocational courses, and possibly attract specific funding). The formation of the collective will enable members to explore their potential to diversify their existing program provision.

The centre is also examining a number of enterprise-oriented methods of increasing its financial resources, one of which is the running of a monthly craft market, selling the products of centre courses.

4.4 Relationship with TAFE

4.4.1 Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE: Brighton campus

Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE has a number of campuses located to the south west and east of Adelaide. The two campuses which are physically close to the Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre are the O'Halloran Hill campus (which is the main campus) and the Brighton campus.

The Brighton campus is the main enrolment centre for leisure courses, women's studies and preparatory education (which includes literacy, numeracy and the Certificate in Introductory Vocational Education). The campus is physically small, but its location on and near train and bus routes makes it accessible for students unable to afford private transport.

The present case study has taken as its focus the adult literacy provision of Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre, and for this reason, the Brighton campus of Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE has been studied from the perspective of its adult literacy program.

4.4.2 Background to TAFE literacy provision

In South Australia, TAFE was the only provider of adult literacy until 1988 when adult community education providers were funded to deliver adult literacy courses in a community setting. However, the provision of adult literacy by two different types of provider does not encourage competition in delivery as community providers have been designated to supply the most basic literacy tuition while TAFE providers target a higher level of competence. This creates a pathway from community to TAFE providers, and this case study has explored the degree to which students move from one type of provider to another in improving their literacy levels (see Section 4.2).

In its original form, adult literacy in TAFE was taught in two locations—by volunteer tutors working on a one-to-one basis in students' homes and by part-time instructors working with groups of students in a TAFE college. The entry of the adult community education sector into the adult literacy field saw TAFE continue with its college-based, group classes and community providers take over the in-home, volunteer provision mode. There followed a transition period where TAFE providers phased out their use of volunteer tutors and encouraged students to attend a college for tuition. After this time, adult literacy provision took two paths—one based in student homes and community centres and the other based in TAFE institutions.

Since late 1992, the Brighton campus—through Onkaparinga Institute—has been funded to provide literacy courses. The

Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) provides for Jobsearch and Newstart clients to take literacy courses of fifteen hours or more each week, which is deemed to constitute full-time study for such courses. While studying, clients continue to receive unemployment benefits but do not have to be 'actively seeking work' to qualify for these benefits.

TAFE colleges providing literacy courses are accredited assessors of literacy and numeracy ability and CES officers send job seekers to these colleges for assessment. The Brighton campus has since provided courses for CES-referred 'traditional' literacy students. This class spans seventeen hours per week over three days and was established in response to the perceived literacy needs of job-seekers. There are no fees charged to these students. The injection of DEET funding for literacy classes for job seekers has stimulated a further formalisation of curriculum and assessment, with the established curriculum being re-written into competency format.

4.4.3 Course provision

Literacy courses are classified at the preparatory level and are structured into modules. Students typically spend between six months and two years in courses provided at this level, and are guided towards the Introductory Vocational Education Certificate, which is considered by the college to be the ensuing stage from completion of the literacy program.

The maximum size for a literacy class is ten students, and the average class size is eight students to one tutor. All classes are equipped with personal computers, and students do much of their work on these. Consequently, in improving their literacy and numeracy levels, they are also able to develop keyboard and other computer-related skills.

Classes run for two and a half hours at a time, and students can attend several classes each week. For traditional classes (that is, non-job seekers) the fees are $30.00 per semester, with each semester lasting for nineteen weeks. This covers all materials for the course, and Health Card holders pay a $15.00 concessional fee.

4.4.4 Student profile

The traditional literacy classes are composed mainly of women, aged between seventeen and fifty, who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Many are unemployed, and of these, a considerable proportion have been unemployed for considerable periods of time. Some of these people are job seekers but elect not to do the full-time, seventeen hours per week course.

There are two separate classes for students of non-English-speaking backgrounds. Across all classes, there were some fifty students enrolled during 1993 in literacy courses, and about twenty of these were in the job seekers group.

4.5 Relationship with Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre

Literacy co-ordinators from the neighbourhood centre and the Brighton campus have established a strong working relationship but few literacy students have come to TAFE from the neighbourhood centre. Stronger pathways appear to exist between the Brighton campus literacy program and a local Skillshare provider.

Our interviews with students from the TAFE and neighbourhood centre courses found a strong trend for each group to continue their studies with their original provider. TAFE students were not interested in pursuing courses outside of TAFE, and Trott Park students wished to complete their literacy studies with the centre rather than continuing at a more advanced level with TAFE. TAFE was seen by them as an option to undertake specific vocational courses, when their literacy levels had reached a satisfactory level, and when their self-confidence had reached a similar level. However, students did not set a date for completing their literacy studies, and were most reluctant to do so. (This was also the case with TAFE literacy students.)

This is an interesting finding, given the Training Reform Agenda's encouragement of the development of pathways between different providers and different education sectors. Unless students are informed and enthused about these pathways, they may not be used to advantage.

4.5.1 Competition and co-operation

The relationship between the college as a whole, and between its adult literacy program and Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre is essentially co-operative. Each provider accepts a designated level of responsibility and considerable effort has been expended to avoid duplication of effort and of resources.

A pathway from the community provider level to TAFE has been established in relation to adult literacy, but students have not demonstrated a readiness to utilise this path. This is probably a direct outcome of the needs, other than learning, which many adult literacy students experience. Tutors interviewed from both types of providers emphasised the building of self-confidence which accompanies the improvement of literacy skills, and much of this

self-confidence is dependent on the building of trust between tutor and student. Consequently, it is not surprising that students are reluctant to change to another provider while their confidence levels remain low.

4.6 Conclusion — future directions

Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre's future direction will further the pattern of provision in place at the time of writing—that is, a combination of support and learning opportunities which are consumer-driven and which occur within a community development framework. There is scope to expand the current program and centre staff are keen for this to happen. However, they are restricted in their plans for expansion by limited physical space.

The expansion of the current funding base through entrepreneurial activity would also enhance planning ability, while providing the opportunity to add to the existing program. Similarly, the formation of the Fleurieu Community Education Network promises cost savings and the employment of specialist staff. This, in turn, could mean that the current program would change in content. Whether or not this would involve the development of specifically vocational courses, as is happening in other community centres in Australia, is not known at this stage.

5 Case Study 2: The Workers' Educational Association of South Australia Incorporated

5.1 Introduction

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) of South Australia has been established as an adult education centre since 1913. Located in the Adelaide inner-city area, it is South Australia's largest adult community education provider with some 31 000 students attending its program each year. The WEA operates on a statewide basis, but almost all of its courses are provided in the metropolitan area.

The organisation is managed by an elected board, which is guided by a management committee (made up of board members, elected staff members and the executive officer). All line managers and staff report to the executive officer, who in turn reports to the management committee and to the WEA Board. Various committees and work groups report via line managers to the executive officer and ultimately to the board.

5.2 Features of the WEA

5.2.1 Guiding principles

The WEA is guided by an eight part philosophy and by these six principles –

The WEA will:

1 Provide the opportunity for all individuals to improve and enrich their lives through further education.
2 Respond to the needs of the community particularly those not being met by other educational bodies.
3 Provide further education without exclusion to the community.
4 Seek to provide educational opportunities particularly to disadvantaged groups.

5 Encourage student participation in its organisation.
6 Endeavour to work towards a more just, equal, open and democratic society.

5.2.2 Program provision

In recent years, the WEA's broad-ranging adult education program has expanded to include courses with a specific vocational focus, and to make particular provision for students with disabilities. The organisation's program spans these fields –

- recreational courses
- basic education
- languages
- vocational courses
- English as a second language and English conversation groups
- educational tours, both within Australia and overseas
- general adult education

In recent years, more than 2 000 different courses have been provided by the WEA. Among the most popular are courses teaching skills in golf, jazz/funk dance, ballroom dancing, Thai cookery and Mature Age Entry courses (the latter are provided for adults seeking entry to university and some TAFE courses without Matriculation. These courses have been doubled in capacity to meet demand). Increasingly, in response to student demand, the WEA has been providing courses with a strong vocational orientation, and these have been the focus of this case study.

Vocational training

The WEA has always provided a range of courses which are clearly vocational in content, but in recent years, this range has been extended. A number of courses are designed to meet the training needs of small business, and many of these clients are referred directly by the Small Business Corporation of South Australia. Almost all of the students attending these courses have their tuition expenses met by their employers. Among the courses provided in 1993 as part of the organisation's Business and Investment program were basic accounting, effective negotiating, introduction to public relations, plan and start a business, marketing and start an import business.

A number of courses designed to develop vocational skills were also provided. Among these courses were skills for supervisors, book-keeping, retail display, selling and communication skills, basic counselling skills, beginners typing and care attendance.

The WEA has established a computer training centre which provides a range of short courses structured to meet the requirements of the Training Guarantee Act. These courses

encompass computer awareness training, word processing skills, desktop publishing, spreadsheet use and data base application. Courses can be customised to match consumer need, and fees charged are very competitive (the standard cost is $20.00 per hour) and concessions are available to eligible Social Security recipients. The centre itself operates with high standard hardware and each student has exclusive use of a computer during a course. In 1993, over 2 000 students attended the computer training centre and more than 250 courses were provided.

A number of short courses have been developed under the WEA's Management and Staff Training program, and other courses are provided in response to specific consumer need. In 1993, such courses included train the trainer, introduction to management practices, conflict resolution and mediation skills, media interview skills, problem solving and decision making and leadership for women. The demand for these courses has been increasing.

Equity provisions

The WEA has a strong commitment to social justice which is evident in its adoption of an access and equity policy and its provision of a number of facilities designed to enhance access for disadvantaged groups. A concession policy applies to fees charged for all courses, and this is partly funded by State government funding support, and partly by redistribution of income derived from courses. Concessions are available to people receiving the Age Pension, the Unemployment Benefit, Supporting Parent Benefit, Austudy and Abstudy recipients, and holders of Health Cards.

With annual funding from the Department of Human Services and Health, the WEA has established a program designed to facilitate access to its courses for people with disabilities. The Integration and Access Project offers a 75 per cent reduction on most course fees to students with a disability, a free course place for the student's personal supporter, adaptive equipment to facilitate course participation (for example, speech cards and zoomtext for computer usage, adjustable height tables), and an assurance of physical access to classrooms. The WEA has developed a scheme which draws on the assistance of students who volunteer to be a companion to assist students with disabilities with transport, note-taking and to provide ongoing support. In conjunction with the Royal Deaf Society of SA, the WEA arranges for Sign Language Aides for students with hearing impairments.

Specific provisions are also made to facilitate women's access to WEA courses. Apart from benefits available to those qualifying for fees concessions, women pay a subsidised fee when undertaking access courses. (Access courses are specific courses teaching personal development skills.)

Other course features

Most courses are structured in short course format, while vocationally-focussed courses are in module form.

The minimum number of students needed to provide a course is between nine and ten people.

5.3 Student profile

The number of students attending WEA courses has been growing steadily and by 1993 had exceeded 31 000 people. As with all adult community education provision, the majority (65 per cent) of these students are women, but the WEA attracts a higher proportion of men than do many other community providers. Students span an age range of fourteen years to sixty five and more years, with most (some 60.0 per cent) being under the age of forty-five.

In promoting courses, the WEA targets women, young people, people on low incomes, older people, people with low levels of literacy and numeracy, and people not in the workforce. As a group, students reflect a mixture of socio-economic backgrounds, but most are from middle-class groups. About one-third have been educated at the tertiary level, and nearly 25.0 per cent enrol at a concession level.

Nearly 68.0 per cent of WEA students are employed, approximately 24.0 per cent are not in the workforce and the remainder are unemployed. The largest occupational group is employed in the Professional/Technical and Para-professional category, followed by the clerical category. The remaining employed student population is spread over the Sales and Service, Trades/Manual and Managerial/Administration occupational groups.

5.4 Staff

Each year some 500 teaching staff are employed, contracted on a course by course basis. Eighteen administrative and support staff are employed, eleven of these on a full-time basis. A further 12 people work in a voluntary capacity, serving on committees and the WEA Board.

Teaching staff are recruited not only on the basis of their formal qualifications and experience but also according to their commitment to teaching, their interpersonal skills, and their understanding of adult teaching methodologies.

5.5 Physical facilities

The WEA's main site is located in the inner-city area of Adelaide and consists of a large building housing administrative staff on the upper floor and providing numerous classrooms on the ground floor. Extensive use is made of school buildings and university classrooms to conduct the general education program. WEA staff describe their facilities as inadequate and limiting their capacity to deliver education and training.

5.6 Funding sources

In 1993 the WEA's total income was $2 770 000. Of this –

- 13.5 per cent was derived from the Computer Training Centre
- 48.0 per cent was derived from other course income
- 14.0 per cent came from government grants
- 22.0 per cent was generated by tours

Remaining income was obtained through interest yields and a range of small activities.

This income pattern has changed in recent years. The Computer Training Centre and tours income sources account for an increasing proportion of income for the organisation while full fee paying student income has declined as concessional fee payment has increased. In 1992, students paying concessional fees accounted for 21.0 per cent of all students, increasing to 25.0 per cent in 1993 and with an increase to 27.0 per cent being budgeted for in 1994. At the same time, the WEA has reduced the amount which concessional students pay for their tuition, from 58.0 per cent of the full fee to 53.0 per cent in 1994.

5.7 Response to change

5.7.1 Impact of the training reform agenda

The WEA is responding to demand from consumers—both individuals and enterprises—to provide courses designed to increase a range of vocational skills. The establishment of the computer learning centre is the most obvious example of this trend, as is the further development of training programs for business. Whether or not this demand originates directly from the influence of the Training Reform Agenda is unclear, as much of the demand appears to reflect consumer need for skill development and skill enhancement. The recession has had a definite impact on this demand, and in the general education program, there has been an upsurge in the popularity of skill-based courses (for example

keyboarding, foreign languages and yabbie farming) while many recreation courses experienced a decline in enrolments. The Training Guarantee Act has also been instrumental in increasing demand from business for training and the WEA has responded to this demand.

The Training Reform Agenda's encouragement of the registration of training providers and the provision of accredited courses has also affected the WEA, which has been keen to follow this route. Unfortunately, the organisation has found the procedures involved time-consuming and expensive, and has been informed that its courses are not of sufficient length to warrant accreditation. Consequently, the organisation has negotiated to run courses leading to the TAFE Certificate in Office Skills, under licence from TAFE. The WEA was registered in May of 1993 to run these courses, but by January of 1994 had not done so because of a lack of student demand for the courses. Most WEA students seeking office-related skills are in employment and seek to obtain or update these skills, and have not expressed interest in obtaining formal certification for their course involvement.

At the time of writing, the move towards competency-based training had not affected the WEA's program provision. The main influence of the Training Reform Agenda would seem to lie in relation to course accreditation, and for the WEA, this holds its attraction because of the potential to obtain DEET funding to deliver training for labour market programs.

There exists considerable pressure from students, particularly those undertaking specifically vocational courses, to obtain certification for their studies. The WEA issues Statements of Attendance in these courses, and these are considered by students and their employers to provide the formal recognition they require for their participation. These were issued for more than fifty courses in 1993, and formal 'Certificate of Merit' examinations were conducted in eight subjects.

At the time of undertaking this case study, there was little demand from students for their courses to articulate with those of other providers, but WEA representatives believe that the wide implementation of recognition of prior learning is likely to stimulate clear pathways between the adult community education sector and the TAFE sector.

5.8 Relationship with TAFE

5.8.1 Adelaide Institute of TAFE: Centre for Applied Learning Systems (CALS)

The Centre for Applied Learning Systems (CALS) was established to advise TAFE colleges on all issues relating to the planning and

development of learning resources and to provide the facilities needed to produce learning systems utilising a variety of media components. The centre's role includes supervision of colleges' learning materials to achieve quality control while considering cost-effective usage of college resources.

CALS has a research function relating to open learning activities. It can assist colleges to develop open learning systems and can provide access to specialist staff and facilities.

The centre has five specialist areas, namely—

- Learning Systems and Instruction Design (LSID)
- Educational Media Unit (EMU)
  Educational Publications Unit (EPU)
- LEARN Network
- Computer Based Learning Unit (CBLU)

Our case study has focussed on the programs offered by the CBLU, because this offers a focus for comparison with the Computer Training Centre operated by the WEA.

The Computer Based Learning Unit

This Unit has two primary functions—

1 to provide training in the use of Macintosh software, computer-based learning software, and multi-media software;

2 to undertake project work in the area of computer-based learning.

Program provision

Training is provided in short course format for people whose computer skills range from non-existent to advanced. Most courses run for six hours, condensed into one session or spread over two sessions. The longest course runs for twenty four hours, over a period of eight weeks.

Course provision at CALS is extremely flexible, with most courses being able to be developed within a week, and able to be designed to meet the needs of a given group of students. The main program offers a pre-determined content, based on identified demand.

The usual cost for a course is $120.00 per day (or $20.00 per hour) with a maximum cost of $150.00 per day. Most courses are provided between the hours of 9am and 4pm, and although programs are offered in the evening, there has been little demand expressed for this. The minimum number of students required to

provide a course is set at three, and the maximum allowed (because of equipment restrictions) is twelve.

None of the courses is formally accredited. CALS, like the WEA, has been informed that their courses are not of sufficient length to meet South Australian accreditation requirements. At the same time, some CALS courses have been incorporated into certificate courses provided interstate. Students completing courses receive a CALS certificate of attainment, but any recognition of courses arises from reputation rather than from formal accreditation.

Student profile

In terms of overall program provision, CALS students are almost evenly composed of men and women. However, a distinct gender bias is evident in relation to specific courses with men being more likely to undertake computer-based learning courses while women are more likely to undertake courses relating to publishing.

Students range in age from between twenty to sixty five years, but the most common age group is forty to fifty years. The majority are employed, with their tuition fees being paid by their employers. From an annual total of approximately 400 students, only four (1.0 per cent) are of non-English-speaking backgrounds. Some TAFE students form part of the CALS student population.

Staff

The Computer Based Learning Unit operates with three full-time staff and various contract staff.

Physical facilities

The Unit has a teaching laboratory and has access to the Adelaide Institute's facilities (including library, counselling and student support services). There are no child care facilities, but most of the students accessing the CBLU are described as being unlikely to use child care.

5.8.2 Relationship with the WEA

CALS operates in a highly competitive environment, as there are many providers delivering similar courses, especially in the Adelaide metropolitan area. CBLU staff nominate the University of Adelaide and the WEA as two key competitors, and identify a number of interstate providers against whom they tender to supply learning packages.

In relation to fee-for-service computer studies training, the relationship between CALS and the WEA is one defined by competition. This is not surprising, given the strong similarity between the two organisations' computer training programs. This similarity is apparent in relation to course length, fees charged and course content.

5.9 Future directions

5.9.1 Relationship with TAFE

The providers described in the other three case studies reported here are operating at the local level and their relationship with TAFE occurs through the TAFE college in their locality. The WEA operates across a number of localities, and its relationship with TAFE is more diffuse. Apart from communication links which have been established at the central administrative level—most of which relate to registration and accreditation matters, the WEA has established close working relationships with a number of TAFE institutes in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

The Torrens Institute and the Para Institute of TAFE have established formal links with the WEA in the form of steering committees whose purpose is to overview adult community education provision in their respective regions. This relationship has received its impetus from the creation of Institutes of TAFE because part of the institute role is to work closely with local community providers. The WEA has also been providing courses at the Parks Community Centre, these courses having been developed in conjunction with TAFE to fill a gap left by TAFE in withdrawing its ACE provision at the community centre.

Another aspect of the role of TAFE institutes is to provide for the professional development of all trainers. This has resulted in WEA staff attending several TAFE seminars for trainers. Taken as a whole, it would be reasonable to describe the linkages between the WEA and TAFE in South Australia as minor, but with the impetus arising from the change to an institute structure, these linkages appear to be strengthening.

5.10 Issues to be addressed

The key issues facing the WEA are similar to those facing other community providers studied for this project. The need to secure long-term funding is a constant concern and one which will remain of critical importance in the future. The achievement of the

organisation's commitment to social justice principles presents resource difficulties, both in terms of specialist human resources and in terms of financial resources. Yet community providers like the WEA, more than other providers, are identifiable by this commitment and must be able to meet community expectations about their ability to fulfil that commitment.

The expansion of the traditional program to include courses which are clearly vocational in content and purpose, such as, computer training courses, presents a challenge to the WEA—and to other community providers moving in this direction—because their lack of history as a distinctively vocational training provider means that they must establish their legitimacy as such a provider in order to attract students. This will no doubt emerge over time, but in the interim, the organisation is faced with the dilemma of pursuing formal accreditation and registration and the attendant difficulties which this brings (see section 3.1).

In increasing its delivery of vocational courses, the WEA—like other ACE providers—feels that a dilemma exists in charging full fee-for-service rates for accredited vocational courses. If the WEA were to run the Certificate in Office Skills as a complete 400 hour course (thereby meeting accreditation requirements), this would command a course fee of $1 840. WEA staff are aware that students can undertake the same course through TAFE for less than $400.00. However, private providers would charge more than both TAFE and WEA. If demand for such a course cannot be met by TAFE, some students will meet the WEA tuition fee.

The question for the WEA, at present, is whether to move into a level of course provision and fees charging which competes with private providers, or to continue in the present mode, which successfully meets the needs of its traditional student population while moving further into a clearly vocational mode of provision. The WEA, like other ACE providers, has always had vocational provision as part of its role, but the provision of accredited vocational programs brings with it a set of different implications, some of which challenge its 'traditional' identity as an adult education provider delivering courses for people with a wide range of needs.

6 Case Study 3: Echuca Community Education Group

6.1 Introduction

The Echuca Community Education Group

The Echuca Community Education Group Inc (ECEG), known locally as 'community ed.', has been operating since 1980.

Although located in Echuca, the ECEG draws students from a wide range of communities in a radius of approximately 100 kilometres. This extends into neighbouring New South Wales, as far north as Deniliquin. The organisation has a strong working relationship with Echuca's twin city, Moama, which is located on the opposite side of the River Murray, in New South Wales.

The ECEG provides a diverse program spanning a continuum from general adult education to vocational education. A strong social justice commitment is evident in program provision, and the program as a whole is driven by community development principles. Close links are evident with the local community (which is to be expected for a community adult education centre) and with local industry (which is less expected, but is evidence of the impact of the Training Reform Agenda on the ECEG).

6.2 Features of the ECEG

6.2.1 Mission and objectives

The ECEG is guided by this Mission Statement—

> *To inform, facilitate and collaborate with appropriate authorities in developing the social, intellectual and cultural requirements of the community, through adult, community and further education.*
>
> *Assist appropriate authorities in the development of a productive and innovative society which significantly contributes to the outcomes of government policies.*

Maintain the basic right of all citizens to be given opportunities through the development of programs and services to meet the needs of everyone, including those who may be educationally, economically or otherwise disadvantaged. This will enable them to face the future personally empowered.

Actively explore all avenues for resources and publicly account for all funding received.

The following objectives have been defined to direct the organisation. These cover a wide range of responsibilities, reflecting the ECEG's move away from 'traditional' adult education provision to its response to the changes instigated by the Training Reform Agenda.

- *To provide opportunities for education and training for adults through programs that are specifically designed to meet required standards.*
- *To provide the highest possible level of value-for-money and consumer satisfaction, given that most Community Ed participants pay for their own on-going education and training.*
- *To ensure that public monies, where used, are applied in the most cost-effective way for the greatest good and to provide full accountability.*
- *To react to community and societal expectations.*
- *To promote the priorities of the Australian National Training Authority and the National Vocational Education and Training system: providing value through competition, close interaction with industry, lifelong learning, formation of pathways to other educational sectors, and special assistance to targeted groups.*
- *To act as a force for economic and social change to the benefit of the region.*

6.3 Program provision

The ECEG has moved away from adult education as its sole provision and has evolved to become a diverse, innovative, responsive and flexible provider of a range of programs. In 1993, 38 different courses of a general and recreational nature were offered, together with adult literacy and numeracy programs, and 16 courses were provided by the organisation's Training and Business Centre.

Training and Business Centre courses

Largely in response to local industry and enterprise need, the ECEG formed a separate Training and Business Division. This is a totally

consumer-driven centre, with the ECEG developing courses tailored to the needs of individual enterprises in Echuca and surrounding localities, extending across to Moama in New South Wales. The ECEG has been entrepreneurial in establishing the centre, because it perceived a gap in locally available, industry-focused training opportunities, and decided to respond to this need before private providers moved to fill the gap.

Established in February 1993, the Echuca-Moama Training and Business Centre (TBC) can provide training for individuals or groups, at a site convenient to the consumer—including the workplace, and at times suiting consumer need. Rather than maintaining separate training premises, the TBC rents accommodation (e.g. clubs and motels' convention facilities) or provides on-site training. All programs are consumer-driven, and the TBC describes itself as observing ANTA priorities in taking training to the consumer. Training is provided on a fee-for-service basis. Tutors are employed on a course-by-course basis by the ECEG which acts a broker, linking consumers to courses and providing research, course organisation and course promotion. Examples of courses provided in 1993 are:

- **innovative job-creating opportunities** (becoming a tour guide, setting up a bed and breakfast, transferring from home dressmaking to industrial sewing);
- **in-house training for individual companies** (human relations training, supervisory training, visual merchandising, train the trainer, workplace assessment for the hospitality industry);
- **small group training for workers in different businesses but with common needs** (computer aided drafting and design, showcard and ticketwriting, familiarisation tours for new tourism operators, keyboarding for speed and greater productivity);
- **one-to-one training individuals in specific skills to enhance product competitiveness** (food decoration);
- **public access courses where staff gain perspective from others' problems and solutions** (customer relations);
- **training in skills not offered by other providers** (advanced reading skills for supervisors and managers, effective public speaking, negotiation, business writing, occupational health and safety);
- **general small business management** (marketing, book-keeping, credit control, franchising, preparing a business plan);
- **entry level skills for those without employment** (bridging courses for armed services and police entry exams, bar and food service, child care, attendant care);

- **pre-vocational** (resume preparation, job interview skills, confidence-building, effective communication and assertiveness);

- **computer skills for IBM and Apple systems** (computer maintenance, software installation, data base, spreadsheet, wordprocessing, Windows, computer network design and application, computer aided drafting and design).

In 1993, the TBC was the first community-based Victorian training organisation to arrange workplace assessor training for senior managers in the hospitality industry. It has developed excellent working relationships with industry associations (such as, the Echuca-Moama Chamber of Commerce, Echuca-Moama Tourism Inc and the Regional Development Board). This can be said to be atypical for a community-based organisation, but the ECEG may well be a forerunner of a future pattern of operation for adult community education providers in a climate of change.

The ECEG is aware that while the TBC's offerings are clearly 'vocational' in nature, a significant proportion of its general education program has a vocational purpose and outcome. Its Executive Officer cites the following examples of courses which were *not* provided as part of the TBC program—

- how to take photographs of cattle for a sales brochure
- how to sell and market painted silk scarves
- specialised dish garnishing skills
- how to write profession-based magazine articles

General education programs

General education courses are developed in response to local community demand, according to tutor availability. They are provided on a user-pays basis, but with concessions available for disadvantaged students. The Course Guide describes the ECEG's general education program as being directed by the 'social and economic patterns of the Echuca-Moama and surrounding region'. An example of this influence is the increase of do-it-yourself/self-sufficiency courses during the recession, together with an expansion in courses which enhance creative skills.

The following course types were available in 1993.

- **social issues forums**
- **creative skills** (photography, dressmaking, upholstery, furniture restoration, craft, cookery)
- **environment-focused courses** (energy efficient building design, mud brick building, native seed propagation)
- **languages**
- **educational tours**

- **stress management and personal development** (assertiveness training, grief and loss)
- **life skills** (living on low incomes, budgeting)
- **do it yourself skills** (car and bike maintenance, chainsaw upkeep)

Literacy and numeracy programs

The ECEG provides adult literacy and numeracy education in a variety of forms—

- small group, centre-based (in the ECEG administrative centre, and in the Echuca Neighbourhood House)
- one-to-one, home-based
- workplace-based, designed for individual enterprises

The organisation receives $6 000 in annual funding from the Australian Language and Literacy Policy to employ a literacy co-ordinator. Students are referred from three main sources—the local CES, Skillshare and local industry (most of the latter are self-referrals). The ECEG is DEET-accredited to conduct literacy and numeracy assessments. Three literacy groups are operated by the organisation.

The ECEG has documented a range of outcomes for its adult literacy and numeracy consumers. Following completion of these programs, participants have—

- begun a TAFE computer course
- gained an attendant carer's qualification
- gained a driver's/forklift licence
- read newspapers for the first time
- undertaken a Jobskills training program
- undertaken labour market programs
- commenced tertiary studies
- read workplace training manuals

The South Australian Case Study of Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre and Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE has found similarly positive outcomes for adult literacy and numeracy students.

DEET-funded labour market programs

DEET clients have received training from the ECEG in these areas of learning—

- child care
- clerical assistance
- attendant care

- pre-vocational
- human relations
- employment related skills

Koori programs

The ECEG has established a strong working relationship with local Kooris, to the extent that the organisation is used as a resource by community-based educators in other parts of Victoria. A separate Koori-focused and Koori-driven program structure has been developed by the ECEG. Examples of program provision include:

- a series on local Koori history and culture;
- a revival of traditional basket-making (taught during a visit by a tribal elder and teacher) to pass on to members of the Koori community and to help generate income;
- a mentor literacy and numeracy program to assist Koori mentors to help their young people in their studies;
- photography ;
- catering, cooking, table service, personal appearance, communication skills, customer service for the Yorta Yorta Cultural Centre and Tearooms;
- development of a bush food menu for the Yorta Yorta Cultural Centre and Tearooms.

This program received much of its impetus from the knowledge and understanding gained from a MACWAG (Ministerial Advisory Committee on Women and Girls) project which targeted Echuca for research into barriers to access to further education. The ECEG had participated in the project's discussion with women and girls about perceived access barriers and one of the groups interviewed were Kooris.

From these discussions, it became apparent that Koori women felt isolated and ill at ease attending courses offered to the general community, and that to assist them in participating in further education they needed their cultural identity to be acknowledged and valued, and to feel comfortable in familiar surroundings. In other words, they needed courses to be developed specifically for them, designed around their learning needs. The program which has evolved as a result of this consultation process has been successful from the participant's perspective, as well as from the organisation's perspective. The ECEG has learned a great deal in the process, and has demonstrated its ability to be fully consumer-centred and consumer-driven.

Social justice programs

The ECEG receives funding from the Board of Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) to conduct free or low-cost programs designed to meet the needs of low income families, sole

parents, people who have not completed Year 12, people with disabilities, Koories, rurally isolated people, unemployed people, migrants and refugees, people of non-English-speaking backgrounds, people over 60 years of age and young people. In 1993, the following programs were provided for these target groups:

- skills for returning to study
- social skills for people with disabilities
- cooking on a budget
- budgeting and filling in forms
- interpersonal skills
- grief and loss for people with disabilities

In addition, the ECEG receives $1 500 annually from the Board of ACFE to provide fees concessions and exemptions to disadvantaged students attending its courses.

Distance education

The ECEG is an access centre for Deakin University and Monash University College Gippsland in their provision of outreach studies. The ECEG distributes handbooks and enrolment forms and provides information about course offerings. It also hosts visits from advisors from both institutions.

Echuca neighbourhood house

The ECEG has been active in assisting the local community to establish a neighbourhood house. In early 1993, this had become possible with the provision of a Housing Ministry house and funding for a co-ordinator for five hours per week. The neighbourhood house will offer craft and access/work and study preparation courses, and a learning program which will complement, but not duplicate, that of the ECEG.

The involvement in the project to establish a neighbourhood house has demonstrated the close relationship which exists between community learning and community development processes. The ECEG's community development orientation reflects its commitment to supporting rather than directing the local community in identifying and responding to personal, social and economic development needs.

Course format

A combination of delivery modes is used for ECEG programs—lectures, workshops, practical/hands-on sessions, and small group and one-to-one learning. All ECEG courses observe the requirements of—

- competency-based learning principles
- Training Guarantee Act requirements
- Quality Assurance and Australian Standards accreditation procedures
- OTFE requirements for course content
- Recognition of Prior Learning

Outcomes arising from ECEG provisions

The ECEG has delineated six major outcomes as being desirable and expected from its course provision. These are described as—

- industry-specific skills resulting in better job performance and higher promotional prospects for individual participants;
- transferable skills (eg supervision, communication, problem-solving);
- increased ability to adapt to change;
- greater willingness and confidence in the individual to progress to more demanding training or to higher study;
- greater profitability for individual enterprises through increased employee productivity;
- improved ability of business to respond to changing consumer demand by using skilled employees in more flexible ways.

6.4 Students

In 1992, 2 743 students enrolled across all courses, receiving a total of 33 165 contact hours. 22.0 per cent of these students were enrolled in TBC courses, 44.0 per cent were enrolled in general adult education courses, 28.0 per cent in U3A courses and 5.4 per cent in literacy courses. Projected enrolments show a continued increase in enrolment numbers.

6.5 Staff

The core grant funds 1.4 co-ordinating staff. Extra staff time and a part-time book-keeper are supported by self-generated funds. All other staff are volunteers, and these centre on a primary group of nine people. Tutors operate on a contract basis, and there are between 60 and 70 of these, some of whom teach on a voluntary basis.

A 15 person, annually elected voluntary Management Board is responsible for the organisation.

6.6 Physical facilities

The ECEG's administrative centre is located in Echuca's former civic centre building, which is situated in the town centre, near the historic wharf area. In terms f facilities, the administrative centre for the ECEG has a small library and one teaching/meeting room. These are leased from Echuca City Council. A range of teaching facilities are rented within and outside of Echuca with location being determined by individual course requirements.

On-site childcare is not available, but the ECEG receives Board of ACFE funding to subsidise parents for costs incurred in centre-based and family day care child care while attending ECEG courses. However, in seeking a venue which can house teaching and administrative functions, the ECEG is aiming to obtain on-site child care as this is the preferred option of most parents.

6.7 Funding sources

The ECEG is a non-profit organisation, which receives its core grant from the Victorian Board of Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE). This provides for staffing, some infrastructure, adult literacy and basic education programs, professional development, concessional rebates and program funding for specified social justice target groups. A further five funding sources support the organisation. These are:

- Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) funding for literacy and numeracy provision
- Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET) funding for specific, tendered program delivery and special intervention programs
- Fee-for-Service business training courses
- User pays courses
- Sponsorships and grants (some courses receive sponsorship from local employers).

6.8 Response to change

The Executive Officer of the ECEG points to the last two years or so as being a period of dramatic and ongoing change, reflected in changing training needs and changing ECEG priorities and programs. The centre's program has broadened from one which provided general adult education courses to one which also provides vocationally-oriented courses, geared to competency standards and to the needs of industry and of individuals needing to develop or upgrade their skills. The ECEG now tenders competitively with private providers to deliver vocationally-oriented courses and to provide DEET-funded labour market training. This has involved significant change for the organisation.

6.8.1 Impact of the Training Reform Agenda

It is clear that the ECEG has been affected by, and has responded to the demands of the Training Reform Agenda, causing it to adapt both course content and course presentation accordingly. The ECEG's executive officer points to the last two years or so as being a period of dramatic and ongoing change, reflected in changing training needs and changing ECEG priorities and programs.

The establishment of the Training and Business Centre is described by the executive officer as a direct outcome of the Training Reform Agenda, as the ECEG responds to local industry training needs. Recognition on the part of local industry of its need for training was identified by the centre. At the same time, the ECEG had identified a need for its own diversification to provide a program encompassing both general and vocational education.

In providing courses for local industry, the ECEG has delivered two main kinds of programs. The first consist primarily of short courses designed to fill a specific skill or knowledge gap. The centre is also involved in providing programs with a longer term focus. For example, it is sub-contracting tutors for local industries to meet ongoing training needs and is working with them to develop a workplace literacy program.

The provision of workplace literacy tuition is the second main kind of program delivered by the ECEG to local industry. The need for this training had been identified by a number of local firms who had approached the centre to meet this training need. This builds onto the ECEG's own literacy program for which it has received funding from the Australian Language and Literacy Policy. Most students for this program are referred by DEET (via the Commonwealth Employment Service), Skillshare and local industry.

At the time of this study, the ECEG was negotiating with major local employers to develop workplace literacy programs. It had identified a clear need for such programs arising from the demand for re-training in industry. Much of this re-training is seen as

arising from re-structuring, down-sizing and multi-skilling demands, and in the process of re-training, literacy and numeracy needs among employees are becoming increasingly evident. This is not a localised issue; it is a nation-wide trend, and the need for workplace training to incorporate literacy and numeracy education is a key issue to be addressed in the implementation of the Training Reform Agenda.

As an adult community education provider, the ECEG's program diversification was as much a response to demand from industry as from individuals seeking to establish or extend their vocational skills. In most cases, the demand from individuals has been influenced by pressures wrought by the recession—the impact of which has been substantial in many rural areas—and an expressed need by individuals to improve their employment opportunities by improving their skill levels.

Consequently, the ECEG's adoption of a direct vocational role has been a response to demand at both the individual and the enterprise level. The demand from enterprise is a direct response to Training Reform Agenda requirements while that from individuals is a dual response to the Training Reform Agenda and to economic change.

6.9 Relationship with TAFE

6.9.1 Loddon-Campaspe College of TAFE—Echuca campus

The Loddon-Campaspe College of TAFE has its main campus in Bendigo and has a number of additional campuses in the surrounding area, one of which is located in Echuca. The Echuca campus has been operating for many years and has a well-established identity in the region. Operating from premises which were purpose-built about twelve years ago, it provides courses at the Certificate level for some 660 students each year.

These premises offer on-site library facilities as well as access by modem link to the larger library based in Bendigo. A student counsellor from the Bendigo campus visits Echuca for one to two days each fortnight and is available on an on-call basis. There is no on-site child care at the Echuca campus, but this is available at the Bendigo campus, which is some 96 kilometres from Echuca. A Koori Liaison Officer visits the Echuca campus for three days each week.

Courses provided cover traditional trade apprenticeships in the areas of motor mechanics, electrical mechanics and farming. Other courses are divided into six program areas—rural studies, (reflecting local need, and including courses in woolclassing, farm financial skills and a series of short courses provided on demand),

business studies, general studies (these provide modules leading to a certificate in supervision), electronology, motor mechanics and welding.

Provision of DEET-funded labour market training is a significant activity for the college. Most of the courses tend to provide business studies skills, computer-related skills and skills related to the operation of machinery (for example, forklift and backhoe operation). The college also loans its facilities to large enterprises (for example, Ford, Holden and Mitsubishi) to provide in-house training.

A distance education program is also provided but only about 3 per cent of students participate, with most preferring to attend their courses on campus.

Most students (90 per cent) attend their courses in the evenings and most are enrolled on a part-time basis. The gender profile of the student population has been found to have changed markedly in the past three to four years. Originally, women represented only 20 per cent of all students, but this has increased to approximately 40 per cent as the college has diversified its provision away from one targeting traditional apprenticeship areas. More women are participating in agricultural courses, business studies courses and in DEET-sponsored courses. This change in gender balance has been accompanied by a move away from a largely 17 to 22 year old student population to one with a mixture of ages ranging between 17 and 50 years.

Although the student population is primarily Anglo-Australian, the college has established a number of courses designed specifically for Koori people. It also provides a Koori liaison officer. The agricultural course for Kooris has been particularly successful and OTFE is providing funding to establish a model Koori learning centre in Echuca.

6.9.2 Impact of the training reform agenda

The director of the Echuca campus perceives that the college is changing almost annually, and that this rate of change is becoming more rapid. He contrasts the college's current provision, which is largely demand-driven, with that of a decade ago, when course offerings reflected only college needs.

Apart from a change in the balance between supply and demand of course provision, in the past two to three years the impact of the Training Reform Agenda has been felt increasingly by the college. This has been manifested in the pressure to provide courses designed to meet the needs of industry in a general sense and in relation to addressing skills gaps. For example, a growth area in course provision has occurred in the area of business studies.

In order to meet the needs of industry, the college has had to diversify both course provision and the manner of provision. This has required the college to be flexible and responsive to specific needs and immediate needs. The college now provides a course in response to demand if a minimum of ten people are able to participate. The director welcomes these changes, and believes that they should have occurred at least fifteen years ago.

6.9.3 Competition and co-operation

Although the college now operates in a more competitive arena, mainly in tendering for DEET-funded programs, its relationship with private providers is not highly competitive. There are between six and eight such providers operating in the region, but these tend to specialise in certain fields and hence function within 'niche' markets.

Of all providers, Skillshare tends to outdo TAFE in obtaining funding for labour market training because (as the director perceives it) it can also provide ongoing support, a drop-in environment and more flexible program delivery than TAFE. TAFE's structure is described by its director as limiting its ability to provide such a training approach. Nevertheless, he describes the college's working relationship with local Skillshare providers as positive. This is reflected in the proportion of Skillshare students who go on to study with the college, taking a clearly defined pathway between the two types of providers.

6.9.4 Relationship between the college and the Echuca Community Education Group

The director of the college describes the college's working relationship with the ECEG as excellent. The two providers liaise closely and cross-refer students to each other. Courses are often advertised collaboratively. The college used to provide Stream 1000 programs, but approached the ECEG to take over these. Consequently, any duplication in course provision has been minimised.

The ECEG's executive officer describes her centre's relationship with the college as extremely co-operative and supportive. This was evident in the attempt by both organisations to share teaching premises. An attempt by the ECEG to take over the technical college buildings on the local TAFE campus was unsuccessful. This was unfortunate given the relationship between the ECEG and TAFE and the scope for increased use by the ECEG of TAFE facilities offered by co-location. There had also been plans made by each organisation to develop a community college based on a sharing of resources and expertise. This would have cemented the working relationship which already exists between the two.

In essence, the relationship between the ECEG and the college is defined by co-operation. The ECEG's relationship with local private providers is a competitive one, while that existing between the college and these providers is less competitive, because of the tendency for private providers to seek out niche markets which do not duplicate TAFE provision.

6.10 Conclusion — future directions

The Echuca Community Education Group has experienced significant change in the past two years or so, and in the process has moved from being a 'traditional' adult community education provider to one whose provision spans a continuum ranging from general adult education to vocational education. This provision is not occurring in competition with TAFE but it does involve competition with private providers.

Such change raises a number of issues for the ECEG. These are:

1 In order to successfully deliver labour market and other programs tendered for on a competitive basis, the ECEG needs to increase its core staff. Increased staff resources are needed in order to diversify program delivery and to expand the existing funding base.

2 Staff resources are also strained significantly by the processes involved in course accreditation. However, accreditation is mandatory in order to deliver particular programs which bring an increase to the current funding base.

3 Finally the ECEG faces an ongoing struggle to obtain affordable and appropriate housing which will co-locate the organisation's administration and teaching functions.

7 Case Study 4: Manly-Warringah Community College

7.1 Introduction

Manly-Warringah Community College is a non-profit, community-managed organisation which provides a range of adult community education, labour market and vocationally-oriented programs for the local community. Located in Sydney's Northern Beaches area, the college operates from a number of sites, all of which are local schools. In its current form, the college has been operating since 1986 when it was formed by amalgamating three former evening colleges. (In New South Wales, evening colleges and community colleges are similar providers.)

Since 1986, the College has grown dramatically, from 3 394 students to 6 573 students in 1992, with an accompanying increase in courses provided—from 320 courses to 669 courses during this seven year period.

7.2 Features of the college

7.2.1 Course provision

The college's course provision reveals its adult education tradition and 'culture' as well as its response to changing economic and employment conditions. The program can be categorised in this way:

- general adult education (courses are provided in craft, everyday living skills, practical skills, recreation, and in languages);
- courses designed to provide employment-related skills (courses are provided in computing, business-related skills, finance and work skills);
- courses provided to companies, on company premises, which qualify for Training Guarantee Levy support (for example, Workplace English);

- labour market training courses funded by DEET and the State Department of Industrial Relations, Employment Training and Further Education (these courses are full-time day courses run over a periods of six to twelve weeks for unemployed people);

- literacy courses (the college has an ongoing literacy skills program and also provides occasional ten week full-time office skills courses, funded through the Board of Adult Education by the Australian Language and Literacy Policy or by DEET, targeting people for whom English is their second language);

- three week intensive job-seeking courses are provided under a Job Club tender arrangement for DEET, through the CES, throughout the year.

Most courses are provided in the evenings, because the college relies on school buildings to accommodate its learning program. One day-time venue is available. A summer school is also provided.

Aboriginal Study Circles program

In addition to these broad areas of program provision, the college is a participant in the AAACE/Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 'Aboriginal Study Circles' program. This has aimed to establish 1000 study circles during 1993, throughout Australia. These study circles are small, self-managing adult education discussion groups which use study materials developed specifically by AAACE.

The LEAP program

Adding to the college's overall program provision has been the Landcare Environment Action Program (LEAP), which was designed to provide young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty with opportunities to develop their vocational and general life skills. This is achieved by providing a combination of formal vocational training and practical experience in the areas of cultural heritage, conservation, landcare and the environment. This program has become a major achievement for the college.

During 1993, 60 trainees received 26 weeks full time training as part of this program. The college's role has been that of broker, and in this capacity, sub-contracted training from a local TAFE college (the Brookvale campus of Northern Beaches TAFE College). The TAFE College's Building School provided two modules from its carpentry and joinery course to LEAP participants, on the TAFE community college and work sites. These modules were provided at a slightly lower than full commercial rate for the college. (Further information about the relationship between Brookvale TAFE and Manly-Warringah Community College is provided in section 4.0).

7.2.2 Tuition fees

For students, tuition fees involve an average outlay of $65.00 for a course spread over eight weeks (conducted in weekly sessions of two hours each), excluding any equipment hire costs. Computer courses are more expensive, because of the equipment involved, and these average between $150.00 and $200.00 for sixteen hours tuition. This is roughly comparable with courses offered by other community providers.

7.2.3 Students

Like most adult community education providers, the college attracts a largely female student population. Between 75.0 per cent and 80.0 per cent of students are women, although the proportion of male students has been increasing in recent years. Women are known to feel comfortable in the learning environment provided by the college, the location of which (being a local school) is familiar to them.

The current age range for students spans the ages of thirteen to eighty six, but most students are in the thirties and fifties age groups.

Most students are from English-speaking backgrounds, but there has been a slowly increasing proportion of non-English-speaking background students entering the general program (as opposed to the language and literacy program). Detailed information about students, including race and ethnicity data, will be kept from 1994 onwards, to meet NATMISS requirements.

Classes at Manly-Warringah Community College are held to a minimum of eight and to a maximum (for most classes) of sixteen. Some classes, such as, first aid and ballroom dancing, have much higher student numbers.

7.2.4 Staff

The majority of college staff (180 people) work on a contract basis according to course demand. Three staff are full-time employees and a further twenty administrative staff are employed on a part-time basis.

7.2.5 Physical facilities

The college operates with a minimum of physical facilities. Local school premises, on five major sites, are used for most programs, and due to availability, this usage occurs in the evenings. The main administrative centre is housed in two small rooms within the Narrabeen High School administration building, each of the other major sites has an office for the co-ordinator's use in the evenings.

The college does not own any premises of its own and is dependent on the goodwill of local schools for its presence. A total of $19 000 was paid in 1992 to schools for the use of their facilities, and this includes use of printing, video and other resources. There are insufficient resources to provide facilities such as libraries and child care. The provision is confined mainly to the learning program and its associated support to individual students.

7.2.6 Funding

At the time of writing, the college had a $1.5 million turnover, which is a substantial amount for a small, locally-focussed provider. A considerable proportion of this amount derives from government funding—for labour market program provision and for the LEAP program, which by itself, involved some $500 000 worth of funding. The college receives a modest grant from the New South Wales Board of Adult and Community Education and derives the rest of its income from tuition fees.

7.3 Response to change

The college is responding to a number of changes which have been brought about largely by economic factors, which in turn, affect the demand for education and training. Most students are seeking short skill-based courses, an increasing proportion of which have clear vocational purposes. Those students remaining for longer periods (that is, years rather than months) tend to be language and literacy students.

The trend observed by the college's executive director is for students to take a few different courses, and then to go on to TAFE or higher education. She notes that students can study at the college in a non-threatening environment with easy access, for a small commitment in terms of time and money, before attempting studies in other sectors. The college encourages this trend by referring students to TAFE, and as section 4.0 describes, the relationship between the college and the local TAFE college is extremely positive.

7.3.1 Impact of the training reform agenda

The executive director describes the impact of the training reform agenda on the college as substantial, and one which will increase in the coming years. As she sees it, resources allocated to adult community education are unlikely to increase, and therefore, any increase in resources will be derived from the provision of courses which have formal accreditation.

This raises a number of issues for the college, and indeed, for all ACE providers. The key issue is that the nature of adult community education will be changed, and it is not known whether that will be a positive or a negative outcome. Two other issues emerge in relation to the pressure being felt by the college to provide formally accredited programs. These relate to cost and recognition by students of ACE providers as providers of vocationally-focussed, accredited programs.

For ACE providers, accreditation is an expensive procedure and one which cannot be pursued without some guarantee that the investment will be returned. The executive director makes the point that most students do not recognise ACE providers as suppliers of recognised and accredited vocationally-oriented programs, because traditionally this has not been part of their role. This poses the dilemma of whether to provide these courses and risk outlaying considerable sums of money only to find that small numbers of students participate (making courses cost-ineffective) or of not providing these courses, (which reinforces to students that ACE providers do not deliver such courses) and reduces potential funding sources.

The executive director, like many ACE providers, is fully aware that funding to the ACE sector as a whole is unlikely to increase in the near future, and that any increase in funding is more likely to be associated with the provision of accredited, vocationally-focussed programs. The dilemma faced is that of achieving a balance to ensure that the traditional identity which has its focus in adult education is not lost, while guaranteeing survival in a changing environment, and one which requires providers to respond to consumer demand. This demand includes making vocationally-oriented training accessible at the local level, while also responding to those consumers who seek general adult education.

7.4 Relationship with TAFE

7.4.1 Northern Beaches College—Brookvale campus

The Northern Beaches suburbs are located along the coastline north of Sydney and are part of the metropolitan area. Northern Beaches College of TAFE was formed with the amalgamation of Brookvale and Seaforth Colleges of TAFE in early 1993. The College is part of the newly formed (May 1993) Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE, which also has a campus located at Balgowlah.

In 1994, courses to be offered cover some 140 vocational areas, including labour market programs and programs delivered in collaboration with a range of other providers. Fee-for-service

courses are also provided and annual enrolments for the institute approximate 10 000.

During 1992, enrolments for the Brookvale campus were 6 079—an increase of 9 per cent on the previous year. This increase is in line with a predicted growth in demand for TAFE courses in the Northern Beaches area.

Courses provided by the Northern Beaches College do not, at this stage, proceed beyond the Associate Diploma level, and cover these main areas:

- Administration Services
- Adult Basic Education
- Fine Arts/Ceramics
- Automotive
- Aviation and Maritime
- Building
- Business
- Computing
- Fashion
- Fibreglass and Plastics
- Engineering Trades
- Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Panelbeating
- Welfare Studies
- Prevocational studies

The college also has a Disabilities Unit, which provides special learning facilities for students with disabilities, and two consultants to support physically disabled students and intellectually disabled students. The college provides special courses for students with disabilities as well as supporting these students in mainstream courses.

The Brookvale campus has a newly completed building infrastructure providing a library, student counselling unit, computing facilities, hospitality training facilities and canteen.

There are 13 high schools in the Northern Beaches area, and the campus has developed strong links with these as well as with the Manly-Warringah Community College, CES offices, Skillshare providers and local government.

7.4.2 Impact of the training reform agenda

The college director describes the training reform agenda as having made a major impact on the college in terms of the courses provided and the manner of delivering these courses. The demand for competency-based training has seen the development of CBT modules in some courses, and while this presents some challenges

in timetabling to cater for varying rates of student achievement, this trend is seen as positive.

The college has attempted to develop its modules with award restructuring in mind, but the awarding of allowances and promotions in line with achievement of given levels of competence is the responsibility of employers.

Recognition of prior learning is being introduced for community education modules only.

The director reports that little articulation is occurring between the college and private providers, mainly because these providers are operating in small niche markets, delivering courses which are an end in themselves, and do not require articulation into a TAFE program. This may change with increasing accreditation of private providers' courses.

The training reform agenda has meant that TAFE institutes will need to tender for funds within the TAFE allocation. The director also feels a pressure to plan more efficiently and to be more accountable for the programs delivered.

In terms of competition between providers, this is not perceived by the director as a major issue, with competition between TAFE and private providers occurring in only some areas of course provision (e.g. secretarial studies and travel) and a minimal amount of competition occurring between TAFE and community providers for the delivery of labour market training. Community providers are reported as usually winning tenders over TAFE in this area of provision, but this is not a major concern because labour market training is not a key area of delivery for TAFE.

7.4.3 Relationship between the Community College and Brookvale TAFE

Both the Brookvale College Director and Manly Warringah Community College's Executive Director describe the relationship between their organisations as co-operative and mutually supportive. There has been a deliberate effort to minimise duplication of course provision (see 4.3) and this has been strengthened by the implementation of the Joint Strategic Plan (1993-1995) of the TAFE Commission Board and Board of Adult and Community Education. This Plan is designed to improve the planning, co-ordination and articulation of the provision of adult community education in New South Wales.

From a resource perspective, the TAFE/ACE partnership is a very unequal one. The community college executive director believes that while TAFE can offer her college a great deal in the way of resource-sharing, there is little which her college can do to reciprocate. For this reason, she is reluctant to seek access to local TAFE resources.

Consequently, the co-operation which exists between her college and Brookvale TAFE College is based on open communication and the provision of complementary course offerings. In addition, the community college is playing an important role in linking students to courses provided by TAFE. In this way, pathways between the two types of organisations are being established, even though recognition of prior learning, credit transfer and other formalised mechanisms promoting articulation are yet to be adopted in a concerted fashion.

The strong working relationship existing between the two organisations was evident in relation to the LEAP program, when the community college sub-contracted Brookvale TAFE to supply the training needed for the program. If Manly-Warringah Community College pursues the role of training broker, this type of co-operation will be enhanced, and should redress some of the resource-based imbalance now defining its relationship with TAFE.

7.4.4 Competition and co-operation

Considerable effort has been expended to avoid duplication in course provision, and TAFE has discontinued a number of courses (primarily of the leisure kind) to achieve this outcome. Manly-Warringah's executive director notes that TAFE's withdrawal from some areas of course provision (for example, fashion and cooking) has seen significant increases in enrolments for her college in these areas.

There are some courses provided in common by both organisations, and these are mainly short courses in computing, keyboarding and languages at a basic entry level. However, they are provided in starkly contrasting environments, with those delivered by the community college operating with relatively poorly equipped high school facilities. This is a feature for all course provision. The TAFE college is housed in purpose-built and well-resourced surroundings. Unlike the community college, it is also able to provide a library, child care and student facilities, such as, a canteen.

The strongest area of competition between the two providers occurs in relation to courses for small businesses, but again, each college appears to be catering for different types of needs. The TAFE courses are longer and more structured while the community college courses are more accessible to businesses requiring more flexible delivery. Both colleges offer Japanese language courses.

Complementarity of provision is also determined by the level of course provision. For example, the community college delivers courses (such as boating), which are vocationally-oriented but do not compete with those offered by TAFE because they are beginners' courses. As stated earlier, both organisations also

compete to supply labour market training, but this represents a minor activity on the part of the TAFE college.

There is, then, a degree of competition characterising the relationship between the two organisations, but this is confined to a small area of course provision. The defining element is co-operation, and this is unlikely to change in the short or medium term.

7.5 Conclusion — future directions

For Manly-Warringah Community College, the issues to be addressed all arise from changes emanating from the Training Reform Agenda. Like other ACE providers, the college has always faced the problem of limited resources, and any increase in funding is seen as being directed to accredited, vocationally-focussed courses rather than to 'traditional' adult education provisions.

Consequently, the college is faced with the need to diversify its course provision (which it has been doing) by increasing the proportion of vocationally-oriented programs. The pressure to do this is as much a response to community demand as it is to funding requirements. The additional pressure is seen as arising from a perceived need to deliver formally accredited programs which will enhance the college's funding base.

Accreditation poses its own set of difficulties for the college. Not only is it time consuming, but it is also expensive. There may not be the return in the form of student attendance, particularly when students (as the executive director notes) are unlikely to associate the college with the provision of accredited vocational courses.

A similar dilemma arises in relation to the provision of labour market training. This certainly represents a source of increased funding for the college, but the tendering process involved consumes enormous amounts of (limited) human resources with no guarantee of a return for the time invested. The minimal infrastructure funding in adult community education also makes tendering for new projects, programs and opportunities dependent on the level of skill, vision and commitment of the few full-time staff working in the sector. With only three full-time staff at the college the contrast is most marked when compared with Northern Beaches College of TAFE.

The diversification of the college's program provision raises an additional dilemma, namely, that in moving away from its traditional program, the college risks losing its traditional identity as an adult community education provider. This is a dilemma facing most ACE providers, who are seeking a balance between their traditional and newly emerging roles. Unless this balance is found, they risk becoming cloned versions of vocational education

providers like TAFE. In the process, they risk losing or diminishing the qualities which attract their student population—in particular, flexibility and informality. These issues are critical for Manly-Warringah Community College, and the way in which they are addressed will determine its future direction. As the executive director notes—*Is the opportunity worth the cost?*

8 Conclusions

The four providers studied, like other ACE providers in Australia, are facing a number of challenges emanating from a period of significant social and economic change. As part of the most consumer-driven of Australia's four education sectors, they are responding to changing demands from their users, who increasingly include business organisations. Their orientation is changing, and so is their 'traditional' identity as providers of general education.

One of the most significant features of the change being experienced is the diversification of program provision to encompass courses with a specific skills basis and a vocational orientation. The increasing demand by consumers for such courses reflects a need to enhance employment opportunities, a need which has been exacerbated by the difficult economic circumstances of recent years and by a growing community awareness of the need for skill-based training, and for re-training which allows skill levels to keep pace with social, economic and technological change.

The Training Reform Agenda has been a powerful influence on the vocational program development of many community providers. In addition to the need to respond to consumer demand, providers have also recognised the need to increase resources by diversifying their funding bases. This is occurring by reducing reliance on traditional adult community education funding sources and by seeking funding opportunities associated with the provision of vocational education and training.

This trend brings its own set of dilemmas. It means a loss of the 'traditional' identity of provision of general and adult education, and for some providers this is a major concern. The providers studied here regard this change as a challenge, involving the development of a balance in provision, which retains the original identity while incorporating the new role of vocational education provider.

In promoting a clear vocational role, these providers recognise that they must earn the credibility needed to have this role recognised as a legitimate component of their program delivery. In some ways their traditional program provision militates against community awareness of their scope as vocational providers, and it will need a combination of accurate course promotion, and time, to alter current perceptions.

The accreditation of vocational programs as part of an integrated national training system is one component of the Training Reform

Agenda which was found to be making a significant impact on three of the community providers studied. In seeking to expand their programs to incorporate vocational courses, these providers have established specific training units targeting business as well as individuals, and have sought to deliver a number of accredited programs. The process of accreditation has posed difficulties involving resources of time, personnel and finances and it would seem that their competitive situation, relative to providers who operate on a for-profit basis, warrants special consideration by accreditation authorities.

With all of the difficulties involved in the accreditation process, community providers face the further dilemma of establishing accredited courses with the strong possibility of insufficient student participation due to the lack of widespread recognition of their role in delivering vocational education. It is not surprising, therefore, that the pursuit of accreditation was either avoided or treated with extreme caution, despite an acknowledgement by these providers of the importance of accreditation.

The Training Reform Agenda's encouragement of articulation between providers, and between education sectors, was seen by all providers studied as positive, and with the potential to enhance recognition of the ACE sector's contribution to education provision. However, for community providers' consumers to benefit from the development of clear inter-provider pathways the recognition of prior learning (RPL) was seen as requiring widespread application and an accompanying information strategy designed to increase community awareness of RPL.

The community providers studied reported an increase in student demand for certification of course participation. Certification was being provided by providers themselves, and was not linked to formal recognition processes. However, consumers were reported as being able to successfully use providers' Certificates of Attainment to enhance their employment and promotion prospects.

From the standpoint of the Training Reform Agenda and its promotion of a national system of vocational education and training based on formal and comparable recognition of attainment, the existence of dual recognition processes may well be of concern. It certainly indicates the need to explore the issue to determine any implications arising from the existence of formal and informal course certification.

For all of the providers studied, there existed strong working relationships with TAFE providers, especially when both types of providers were operating in the same locality. The Training Reform Agenda encourages competition between providers as a means of producing more efficient and effective program provision. However, competition should be studied in relation to co-operation, because both will exist in a situation where demand exceeds supply (as occurs in vocational education and training) and where

resources need to be used efficiently (which involves an avoidance of duplication).

This study found that the relationship between TAFE colleges, institutes and community providers was a co-operative one, and one which was based on a high level of planned co-ordination of program provision. Where competition existed for community providers, it occurred in relation to private providers, and involved the delivery of vocational training programs.

The changes identified in this study represent both a challenge and an opportunity for the ACE sector—a challenge because of the demand being placed on community providers' resources and because of the difficult choices faced in the decisions which must now be made about future directions, and an opportunity because of the potential to become widely recognised as providers spanning the full continuum of education programs.

Apart from the magnitude of the change involved, providers must also come to grips with the speed with which this change is occurring. In five years, the context in which community providers operate has altered significantly, and it is likely that this trend will persist. The choices made by ACE providers will determine whether or not the sector moves beyond its 'Cinderella' identity. It would seem that the opportunity now exists for this to happen.

Endnotes

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6. Kimberley, H (1986), *Community learning: The outcomes report*, TAFE Board, Victoria.

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17. Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (1990), *The role of adult and community education in the provision of training*. Appendix 5 in *Training costs of award restructuring*, report of the Training Costs Review Committee, AGPS, Canberra.

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25. Anderson, D (1994), *Blurring the boundaries: Public and private training colleges in the open training market*, NCVER, Adelaide.

26. Wickert, R (1989), *No single measure*, DEET, Canberra.

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Appendix

AAACE	Australian Association of Adult and Community Education
ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACFE	Adult, Community and Further Education
ALLP	Australian Language and Literacy Policy
CAEC	Community Adult Education Centre
CAN	Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
DEET	Department of Employment Education and Training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NFROT	National Framework for Recognition of Training
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
U3A	University of The Third Age
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
WEA	Workers Educational Association